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# A Phonological description of Nzang Terüpvunyu khwen (Assam Rengma)

Rupak Debnath

## Abstract

The Rengma Nagas of Assam speak one of two dialects of the language they call Nzang khwen. A complete description of the phonology of this Tibeto-Burman language of Northeast India needs to be offered, and what little we do know relates primarily to the dialect spoken in Tseminyu, Nagaland. Interestingly, however, the dialect spoken in Karbi Anglong, Assam, was first noticed over a century and a half ago, some fifty years before a scholar gave us a written description of Nzon Tseminyu khwen or Nagaland Rengma. The two dialects are as different as regional dialects can be, and accordingly, comparisons will show the similarities and differences between them. While this paper gives a broadly accurate idea of Rengma phonology, the focus here remains on Nzang Terüpvunyu khwen, or the dialect spoken by the Rengma Nagas of Assam today. An attempt is made to describe fully segments, tones, and syllables and to perform a detailed analysis of the various phonological processes at work. At the end of this paper is a list of Nzang Terüpvunyu words with their meanings and, in some cases, their use in common phrases and sentences.

**Keywords:** Tibeto-Burman, Nzang khwen, Rengma (Naga) dialect, phonology, Assam (Terüpvunyu)

## 1. Introduction

Nzang Terüpvunyu khwen /ṇ.zǎ̀ t̬ə.rəʔ.pf̃ə.nju khwẽ/ is one of two dialects of Rengma, a Tibeto-Burman language spoken in Northeast India. Rengma Nagas living in a small part of Karbi Anglong, Assam, speak this dialect, which may be referred to as Assam Rengma for convenience. To distinguish it from the other dialect spoken by Rengmas in the Tseminyu district of Nagaland, one could also use the term Rengma Terüpvunyu. In Assam Census Reports, the Rengmas are included under the category ‘Any Naga Tribes’, and in 2011 they comprised about 80% of the 8,935 Nagas in Karbi Anglong.<sup>1</sup> In the same census year, the population of Nagas in Dima Hasao was more than double that of Nagas in Karbi Anglong. One meets Zeme and Rongmei Nagas there, but no Rengmas. The census of Assam for 2021 has yet to be carried out. In Karbi Anglong, the Rengmas live in several villages between the Tarapung Nala to the north and the Diphu River to the south. One of their villages, Shahonyu, which lies across the Tarapung Nala, has remained deserted for a while. However, in recent times, some Rengmas have been contemplating returning to their old village and settling there permanently. We have no Nzang villages across the Nkhenari River to the west, while the eastern villages of Hada, Kedaphen, and Rengma Gaon are close to the Dhansiri. In this paper, the focus is on a dialect that was first documented 150 years ago. The Assam Rengmas have been receiving missionary training since the early 1900s. Sadly, we have no schools in Karbi Anglong where children can learn Nzang khwen as their first language. However, there are efforts now to publish textbooks in this dialect. The Rengma Bible, the *Kenshün Lesü*, is written in the Tseminyu dialect. In 2020, the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John (*Jolo Kegwa Ket-tsen Latsi: Matthew, Mark, Luke do John*) were translated into the Rengma Terüpvunyu dialect.

This paper offers a phonological description of Assam Rengma. Although the focus is on segmental and suprasegmental phonology, phonotactics, and phonological processes within this dialect, comparisons are made with the other dialect to show how segments appear predictably in syllables, how processes occur in the word and how the two dialects exhibit the small but significant differences between them. The author collected over 1500 words during two field trips in January and February-March 2023, using English and occasionally Hindi and Assamese for communication. However, the list had to be narrowed down to around a thousand words due to consultants providing many words different from what the author wished to find. Despite this truncation, the list still includes words that can be used in addition to those found in the main paper to support the findings.

## 2. Previous literature and the present study

The Rengma language received some attention during British rule, and Captain John Butler compiled the first list of Rengma Naga words in 1873. This list was made for comparison purposes and included words from two other Naga languages, Mzieme (Butler’s ‘Kuchá Nágá’) and Tenyidie (Angami), as well as non-Naga languages such as Karbi (Mikir) and Dimasa (Kachari). *The Linguistic Survey of India* (LSI) contains two sets of Rengma words: the first includes words taken from Butler’s list, while the second consists of words similar to

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<sup>1</sup> The Rengma population in Nagaland is higher than in Assam, but how much higher is unknown. In the same decennial census for Nagaland, the population of Rengmas is 62,951. This number gives us the total number of two groups, the Nzon or Rengmas and the Nthenyi or Northern Rengmas.

those that were to appear in Mills' *The Rengma Nagas* (1937). Additionally, the *LSI* includes a translation of the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32) into the Rengma dialect spoken in Tseminyu. Hutton's (1921:328-29) list of Rengma Naga words is similar to the list in Mills' (1937) work, although it is much shorter. The latter provides a grammatical sketch of the Rengma Tseminyu dialect, which the author refers to as 'Rengma A' for reasons that will be explained in the following section. A trilingual Hind-Rengma-English dictionary (Rengma and Kumar 1973) published by the Nagaland Bhasha Parishad also compiles Nzon or Rengma Tseminyu words. This book provides word-to-word Rengma and English translations for common Hindi words and includes a 29-page overview of Nzon grammar.

Butler's list is noteworthy because it features words unique to Nzang Terüpvunyu khwen or Assam Rengma. This paper closely examines this specific Rengma dialect, which has had little written about it.

Butler (1873) (Terüpvunyu)	Hutton (1921) Tseminyu	Mills (1937) Tseminyu	Rengma & Kumar (1973) Tseminyu	Author's own data		Gloss
				Tseminyu	Terüpvunyu	
<i>ái</i>	–	–	<i>nyaun</i>	<i>nyau</i>	<i>ainyu</i>	'cat'
<i>ché</i>	<i>tsi</i>	<i>tsi</i>	<i>tsi</i>	<i>tsi</i>	<i>che</i>	'hundred'
<i>chilogottá</i>	–	<i>sü</i>	<i>tsüketa</i>	<i>tsü</i>	<i>chi</i>	'drink'
<i>cho</i>	–	<i>tso</i>	<i>tso</i>	<i>tso</i>	<i>cho</i>	'stone'
<i>di</i>	<i>dzü</i>	<i>zü</i>	<i>dzü</i>	<i>zü</i>	<i>di</i>	'water'
<i>gwá</i>	<i>gwā</i>	<i>gwa</i>	<i>gwa</i>	<i>gwa</i>	<i>gwa</i>	'good'
<i>gwhámo</i>	<i>gwā kemu</i>	<i>gwamu</i>	<i>gwamü</i>	<i>gwamvü</i>	<i>gwamu</i>	'bad'
<i>jóngú</i>	–	<i>nzung ngaro</i>	<i>nzengoro</i>	<i>zenkero</i>	<i>zongpvü</i>	'finger'
<i>héká</i>	–	<i>yheka</i>	<i>yheka</i>	<i>yhüko</i>	<i>heka</i>	'sun'
<i>ká</i>	<i>kā</i>	<i>kha</i>	<i>ka</i>	<i>ka</i>	<i>ka</i>	'house'
<i>kámmé</i>	<i>me</i>	<i>me</i>	<i>mme</i>	<i>nme</i>	<i>keme</i>	'one'
<i>kázi</i>	–	<i>khazü</i>	<i>kazü</i>	<i>kazü</i>	<i>kazi</i>	'earth'
<i>lébú</i>	–	<i>tho</i>	<i>levütsi</i>	<i>thotsi</i>	<i>lumbu</i>	'arrow'
<i>má</i>	<i>mā</i>	<i>ma</i>	<i>ma</i>	<i>mah</i>	<i>mah</i>	'fire'
<i>nghe</i>	<i>āyehte</i>	<i>yhe</i>	<i>yhetü</i>	<i>yhütü</i>	<i>hetü</i>	'eye'
<i>phita</i>	–	<i>hu</i>	–	<i>shwi</i>	<i>phi</i>	'see'
<i>shegozo*</i>	<i>silātā</i>	<i>si</i>	<i>sikela</i>	<i>si</i>	<i>she</i>	'die'
<i>topri</i>	–	–	<i>paro</i>	<i>paro</i>	<i>topri, toperi</i>	'pigeon'
<i>túlogotta</i>	–	<i>te</i>	<i>tyü</i>	<i>tyü</i>	<i>tü</i>	'eat'

\*The word *shegozo* is in the list against the gloss 'dead' (p. xiii).

Regarding the Rengma language, minimal literature has been published since the British departed from India. Marrison's (1967, II:365) work attempted to create an inventory of Rengma phonemes based on the orthographic representation of words found in the works of British officers. However, Marrison admitted to the difficulty of harmonising the available information. Rengma writing is only partially phonetic, and certain letters, particularly digraphs, are pronounced differently than written. The results of this study support the need to construct an Nzang phoneme inventory based on the sounds produced when words are spoken in isolation and strings. Nonetheless, the importance of conventional spelling should be taken into account. Understanding the phoneme-grapheme correspondence in Nzang khwen is crucial in comprehending how things function at a basic level and how native speakers perceive the sounds they combine to form meaningful words.

Apropos of the Nzang Terüpvunyu dialect, we find some words in a comparative vocabulary list of the languages of Assam (Sarmah 2005). Rengmas are used to writing in Latin script, but since the work was to be published in Assamese, David Rengma of Diphu had to provide the Rengma equivalents of select Assamese words in Assamese letters. Subsequently, an Nzang grammar book by J.S. Rengma was published in 2013, followed by a research paper by Longmailai in 2019 on tense, mood and aspect operations in this dialect.

The data used in this paper were collected from three villages in East Rengma Mouza (Jongpha, Akhoiputa (Nruga), and Choshenlari (Choshyenglari) John Rengma Gaon) and suburban Diphu. Male speakers were recorded first, as female speakers were initially hesitant. Eventually, the women complied with the author's request after persuasion from the men on the tapes. Inconsistencies were found and corrected with the help of David Rengma, a native speaker. Despite being gravely ill, John Setbü Rengma of Jongpha provided valuable assistance by checking the data and pointing out inconsistencies. Revd Eshachor Rengma also provided the

author with valuable information. The paper uses about 70 phrases and sentences collected for illustrative purposes. Some of these word strings appear in specific sections, while others are included in the word list.

### 3. Rengma dialects

A single exonym, ‘Rengma’, officially recognises two distinct groups: the Nzang/Nzon or Rengma proper, and the Nthenyi or Northern Rengma. They speak different languages. Mills (1937:285) identified the language of the former as Rengma A and called the language of the latter Rengma B. The Rengma Kuchuris, who live in the Phek district of Nagaland, are among the few Naga groups that make up the Pochury tribe today. Mills (ibid: 288ff) also provided the only available data on the language spoken in Meluri (by the Rengma Kuchuri), calling it Rengma C and claiming that Rengma B (Nthenyi) and C (Meluri) are ‘far more like each other than either is like [Rengma] A’. Marrison’s *Classification of Naga Languages* (1967) systematically analyses Mills’ data on Meluri. In this paper, the term ‘Rengma’<sup>2</sup> refers specifically to Rengma proper (Mills’ Rengma A); its native speakers speak two regional dialects: one in Karbi Anglong, Assam, and the other in Tseminyu, Nagaland. Nthenyi or Northern Rengma is also spoken in the Tseminyu district, to the north of places where the people speak one of two dialects of Rengma proper. In Assam, the Rengmas refer to their first language as *Nzang khwen*, while their relatives in Nagaland call their native language *Nzon khwen*.<sup>3</sup>

A list of 32 words below shows that the percentage of cognates between Nzang/Nzon khwen and Nthenyi is low, except for items that derive from the same etyma reconstructable at a mesolanguage level.

	Nzang khwen/ Nzon khwen		Nthenyi		Meluri
	Terüpvunyu (Author’s data)	Tseminyu (Author’s data)	(Semy 2016)	(Mills 1937)	(Mills 1937)
‘bone’	<i>ariü</i>	<i>nrü</i>	<i>aghü</i>	<i>mawü</i>	<i>arriü</i>
‘chicken’	<i>teriü</i>	<i>tero</i>	<i>aviüghüü</i>	<i>awuu</i>	<i>awi</i>
‘cloth’	<i>pheh</i>	<i>phi</i>	<i>athsü</i>	<i>atsü</i>	<i>atsü</i>
‘dog’	<i>tehih</i>	<i>tehi</i>	<i>affü</i>	<i>aphu</i>	<i>ashu</i>
‘eye’	<i>hetü</i>	<i>yhüü</i>	<i>anyon</i>	<i>anyang</i>	<i>anotha</i>
‘fire’	<i>mah</i>	<i>mah</i>	<i>anye</i>	<i>anyi</i>	<i>ami</i>
‘fish’	<i>tsehü</i>	<i>tsehü, tseühü*</i>	<i>ngaqhu</i>	<i>anga</i>	<i>anga</i>
‘hair’	<i>hüh</i>	<i>hü</i>	<i>asen</i>	<i>ayiasung</i>	<i>ashe</i>
‘horn’	<i>atseh</i>	<i>-tse</i>	<i>aghacü</i>	–	–
‘house’	<i>ka</i>	<i>ka</i>	<i>ajen</i>	<i>azung</i>	<i>aze</i>
‘louse’	<i>terheh</i>	<i>terhü</i>	<i>axhi</i>	–	–
‘meat’	<i>thüh</i>	<i>thyü</i>	<i>asa</i>	<i>asa</i>	<i>asa</i>
‘name’	<i>jen</i>	<i>zeng</i>	<i>nyang</i>	–	–
‘pig’	<i>tebo</i>	<i>tebo</i>	<i>avü</i>	<i>avu</i>	<i>avu</i>
‘stone’	<i>cho</i>	<i>tso</i>	<i>alon</i>	<i>alung</i>	<i>alung</i>
‘sun’	<i>heka</i>	<i>yhüko</i>	<i>ghani</i>	<i>ani</i>	<i>areni</i>
‘tail’	<i>ama</i>	<i>ama</i>	<i>aghaanoo</i>	–	–
‘tiger’	<i>temen</i>	<i>teme</i>	<i>ademi</i>	<i>ametiwa</i>	<i>amiwa</i>

<sup>2</sup> There are two explanations for the origin of the term ‘Rengma’ that would interest folk etymologists. The first is that when the *Tesennyu* or foreigners (here, the term specifically refers to the British) first saw *Nzang* warriors in Assam, they used gestures with words that sounded gibberish to the natives and asked who they were. The warriors believed that the *Tesennyu* referred to their pale ghostly features and asked what they called a ‘ghost’. They answered *rhemeḥ* /ṛə.méʔ/, which the *Tesennyu* or *Britishnyu* took for an endonymous nomenclature, and called them ‘Rengma’. The second explanation is that when the *Britishnyu* first encountered the Assam Rengmas, they found them wearing brass bracelets, brass or ivory armlets, etcetera. They called them ‘Ring-men’, and the *Asenyu* or the plains people of Assam later corrupted the term to ‘Rengma’.

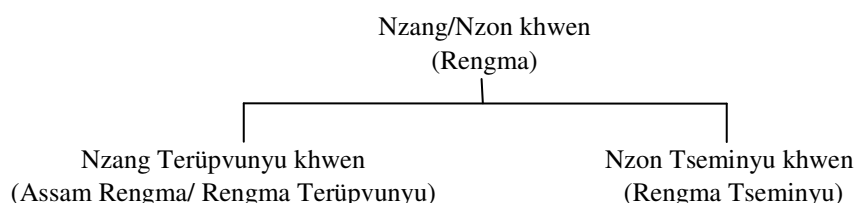
<sup>3</sup> Sociolectal or clan-based differences, though minor, may once have existed in the two dialects, but they may not be reliably detectable now. Slight differences in pronunciation and vocabulary can be observed in one or two villages. Whether the variations are caused by the numerical superiority of one clan over the other is an aspect that could be explored. When it comes to clans, Assam or *Terüpvunyu* Rengmas have fewer clans than their Nzon counterparts in Tseminyu, Nagaland. Clans *Henbünyu*, *Hoyonyu*, *Jishingbünyu*, *Kanrinyu*, *Kempvunyu*, *Nandunyu*, *Nyenthangnyu*, *Reshobünyu*, and *Sebünyu* of the *Nzangnyu* or Assam Rengma live in what was once Rengma Hills, now part of the Karbi Anglong District of Assam. The Rengma (*Nzonnyu*) clans in Tseminyu, Nagaland, are *Apon*, *Cheng*, *Jemu*, *Kemp* (= *Kempvunyu* in Assam), *Kent*, *Kepen*, *Kesen*, *Kez*, *Khing*, *Lorin*, *Magh*, *Mah*, *Mesen*, *Nsü*, *Ras*, *Seb* (= *Sebünyu* in Assam), *Semp*, *Tep*, *Wanth*, and *Woch*.

‘tongue’	<i>nyi</i>	<i>nyi</i>	<i>amielie</i>	<i>ameli</i>	<i>amezi</i>
‘tooth’	<i>hü</i>	<i>h(y)ü</i>	<i>ayha</i>	<i>aha</i>	<i>aha</i>
‘tribe’	<i>chepwen</i>	<i>tsipwen</i>	<i>amizza</i>	–	–
‘water’	<i>di</i>	<i>zü</i>	<i>adsü</i>	<i>atsü</i>	<i>achu</i>
‘and’	<i>do</i>	<i>lo</i>	<i>nuo</i>	–	–
‘but’	<i>aye</i>	<i>ayi</i>	<i>isalaa</i>	<i>isanu, isato</i>	<i>antu</i>
‘one’	<i>keme</i>	<i>nme</i>	<i>kisü</i>	<i>kesü</i>	<i>ke, kesü</i>
‘two’	<i>kenyhu</i>	<i>kenyhun</i>	<i>keni</i>	<i>keni</i>	<i>keni</i>
‘come’	<i>rü</i>	<i>ryü</i>	<i>gho, gha</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>ru</i>
‘cry; weep’	<i>chi</i>	<i>chü</i>	<i>qai</i>	–	–
‘die’	<i>she</i>	<i>si</i>	<i>shüü</i>	<i>shü</i>	<i>si</i>
‘eat’	<i>tü</i>	<i>tyü</i>	<i>tsa</i>	<i>tsa</i>	<i>tsa</i>
‘go’	<i>gü</i>	<i>gyü</i>	<i>waa</i>	<i>wa</i>	<i>wa</i>
plain negative	<i>-mu</i>	<i>-mvü</i>	<i>nme-</i>	<i>me-, ma-/mo-</i>	<i>me-, ma-/mo-</i>

\* Two slightly different spellings, *tsehü* and *tseühü*, are used, but there is no difference in pronunciation, /tsə.hə/.

If one were to exclude the lexical equivalents of ‘bone’, ‘fire’, ‘meat’, ‘pig’, ‘stone’, ‘tongue’, ‘tooth’, ‘two’, ‘die’, and ‘eat’, it would become apparent that the Meluri and Nythenyi words are different from those used in Nsang/Nzon khwen. While the same particle is used in the plain negative, it is used differently in Nythenyi (Rengma B) and Nsang/Nzon khwen (Rengma A). In Nythenyi, it is used as a prefix, while in Nsang/Nzon khwen, it is used as a suffix or postposition (*see* Mills *ibid*: 301); these differences in usage are noteworthy.

In the table above, we have equivalent words in two languages. Although their native speakers use endonyms, we could avoid the same in favour of ‘Rengma’ and ‘Northern Rengma’. This choice may need clarification, though, at least for those unaware that Rengma and Northern Rengma are linguistically distinct. Nevertheless, since this paper will not compare the two languages, we will not need to mention their differences whenever we mention Rengma. Here we shall use the term ‘Rengma’ to only avoid repeating the word Nsang/Nzon khwen over and over. It is worth mentioning that this language has two dialects.



The two dialects differ mainly in phonology. Speakers of one dialect can understand those of the other to a considerable extent. A few substituted words exist in the lexicon; each dialect has borrowed from other languages in contact over the past two hundred years.

#### 4. Orthography and phonemic transcription

Like other Naga languages<sup>4</sup> of Northeast India, Rengma is written with the Latin alphabet. Although the spelling is not strictly phonemic, most consonants and some vowels are pronounced as they are written. The spelling of words in the two dialects is similar, and differences usually result from phonological differences. The following examples demonstrate how words are written and pronounced in the two Rengma dialects.

<sup>4</sup> For convenience, this paper uses the term ‘Naga’. Most ethnic groups associated with this term reside in Nagaland, with some living in Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. Across the Indo-Myanmar border, many Nagas live between the Kachins in the north and the Chin tribes in the south. Unlike the Kuki-Chin groups, which speak related and, in most cases, mutually intelligible languages, the languages spoken by the Naga groups belong to at least two or three subgroups within the Tibeto-Burman branch of Sino-Tibetan. The etymology of the word ‘Naga’ is uncertain. Its association with Indo-Aryan *naga*, meaning ‘naked’, is highly unlikely. There is, however, another Indo-Aryan term *naga* ‘mountain’ (cf. Sanskrit *nagaukas* ‘mountain-dweller’). Assamese *nagā* /nəga/, derived from this term, is probably the source of the name. A Karbi will refer to the Naga as *Naka*, using the mentioned Assamese term. The suggestion that ‘Naga’ comes from Dimas *naga* ‘a young man’ (Marrison 1967, I:13) is not convincing since the Dimas typically use the term *Magamsa* to refer to all Nagas.

Terü	<i>cho</i>	/tʃo/	Tsem	<i>tso</i>	/tso/	‘stone’
	<i>hempung</i>	/hèm.pù/		<i>hempvün</i>	/hèm.pfǝ/	‘fifty’
	<i>hontsen</i>	/hon.tsǝ/		<i>huntsin</i>	/hun.tsǝ/	‘great hornbill’
	<i>ji</i>	/dʒi/		<i>zhü*</i>	/ʒǝ/	‘sleep’
	<i>keshu</i>	/kə.fú/		<i>keshvü</i>	/kə.fú/	‘edible fat’
	<i>kong</i>	/kon/		<i>kung</i>	/kun/	‘cold’
	<i>latsi khwen</i>	/la.tsi khwǝ/		<i>lesü</i>	/le.sǝ/	‘book’
	<i>nyi</i>	/nji/		<i>nyü</i>	/njǝ/	‘laugh’
	<i>pere</i>	/pə.rǝ/		<i>peri</i>	/pə.rǝ/	‘snake’
	<i>pi</i>	/pi/		<i>pe</i>	/pǝ/	‘head’
	<i>shenchong</i>	/ʃən.tʃon/		<i>sentsun</i>	/sən.tsun/	‘domestic buffalo’
	<i>shü</i>	/ʃǝ/		<i>shyü</i>	/ʃjǝ/	‘moon’
	<i>tegu</i>	/tə.gú/		<i>tegvu</i>	/tə.gyú/	‘crow; raven’
	<i>teze</i>	/tə.zǝ/		<i>tezi</i>	/tə.zǝ/	‘blood’
	<i>thayehben</i>	/tha.jǝʔ.bǝn/		<i>thaibin</i>	/tháiʔ.bǝ/	‘banana plant’
	<i>tsekhu</i>	/tsə.khu/		<i>tsekhyu</i>	/tsə.kxhu/	‘grasshopper’

\* In Tenyidie (Angami) words, *zh* transcribes a sibilant fricative pronounced approximately as the voiced postalveolar /ʒ/. It is a rare phoneme in Rengma Tseminyu and does not exist in the other Rengma dialect they speak in Assam.

In the Tseminyu dialect, the spelling closely matches that of the Rengma Bible, the *Kenshün Lesü* (which translates as ‘The Holy Book’). However, some spelling variations may occur in the dictionaries now being compiled. The Rengmas in Assam began writing in the early 1900s. Serishen Sebü (1880-1939), one of the first two Rengmas to be evangelised, wrote about the gospel of Christ while working as a teacher at a missionary school in Shahonyu. However, he did not publish any of his writings while still alive. His notebooks were in the custody of his children, but unfortunately, they were destroyed during the ethnic riots in Karbi Anglong in 2013-2014. An Nsang songbook consisting of 24 hymns was published in 1950/51, and an extended version with over 100 hymns appeared in 1963. A decade later, some secular writings were published in some editions of the Nsang monthly, *Jolo Latsi*. The contention here is that the spelling conventions used by the Rengmas of Assam were built up over many years and are more or less consistently followed by those who write in this dialect.

The Rengma writing system is not perfect,<sup>5</sup> and this holds for most, if not all, known writing systems worldwide, not Rengma alone. Many Rengmas in Assam will note discrepancies between certain letters and their pronunciation but will closely adhere to conventions and make only a few permitted changes. J.S. Rengma, who compiled the first Nsang-English dictionary, chose to deviate slightly from the conventional system for what he believed were compelling reasons. Unfortunately, he was unable to print his dictionary during his lifetime. In the table below, the second column lists words that will be there in J.S. Rengma’s dictionary as long as no editor or editorial board corrects or improves his variant spelling. The first column displays the Assam Rengma spelling of the same words, and this conventional Nsang spelling is also used in this paper.

Conventional spelling	Variant spelling (J.S. Rengma)	Gloss
<i>aden</i>	<i>adend</i>	‘thigh’
<i>deka</i>	<i>dekka</i>	‘where’
<i>khwen</i>	<i>khuwenh</i>	‘leaf’
<i>gwayeng</i>	<i>wayeng</i>	‘bamboo raft’
<i>hü</i>	<i>hüw</i>	‘tooth’
<i>qwetdi (kwetdi)</i>	<i>quwetdi</i>	‘jaggery’

<sup>5</sup> Some natives tend to add the letter *-t* to the prefixes *ke-* /kə-/ and *pe-* /pə/ when adding the same prefixes to roots or stems beginning with *ch* and *t*, e.g. *ketchang* ‘white’, *yongle ketüü* ‘leprosy’, and *petchulo* ‘careful about something’. Likewise, they may also add *-k* or *-g* to the prefixes *ke-* /kə-/ and *te-* /tə/ if the roots or stems contain an initial velar stop: *kekha* ‘quarrel’, *teggi* ‘iron’, *tekkhu* ‘mosquito’, and *tekkü* ‘pit; ditch’. The use of double prefixes is not uncommon in Rengma, but in the examples just illustrated, *-t* and *-k* are not relics of the prefixes *ke-* and *te-*. Many Rengmas strongly disapprove of this type of alternative spelling. Upon closer examination, the author discovered that the impression of doubling arises from the prominence of the approach or catch phase of all plosives and affricates at the beginning of the syllable in Rengma. This feature even leads some native speakers to incorrectly believe that there is a double of the consonant following the prefix in the word. Also, note the addition of *-t* to prefixes in the words *ketzen* ‘night’ (= *kezen* ~ *kejen*) and *petze* ‘four’ (= *peze*).

<i>seki</i>	<i>xeki</i>	‘bank (of river)’
<i>temen (also temeng)</i>	<i>temün</i>	‘tiger’
<i>thügwen, thugwün</i>	<i>thügwünt</i>	‘lard’

On comparing the Nzang alphabet to the English alphabet, it becomes evident that all letters from the latter are used except for *f* and *x*. Individuals may occasionally write *f* instead of *ph* in a word, but this is carelessly rather than intentionally done. Furthermore, the conventional Nzang spelling does not use the letter *x*. A single initial *q* does not appear in the word, but words are written with the cluster *qw*, which is pronounced exactly like /kw/. When asked about this, the response was that *qw* in words like *qwetdi* and *qwenda* sounded like *qu* in the English word ‘queen’. J.S. Rengma preferred to use a *u* between *q* and *w* because he felt that to represent a sound similar to that at the beginning of ‘queen’ /kwi:n/, one had to write *quwetdi* and *quwendah*, not *kwetdi* and *kwenda*. The spelling of Nzang words here uses a *qw* at the beginning, allowing established conventions to resist the desire to write *kw*. However, only ‘kw’ is used in phonemic description and phonetic transcription.

A native speaker knows exactly what changes affect the letter *n* and the digraph *ng* in different word positions. However, since speakers of another language are not consciously aware of how exactly phoneme-grapheme correspondences work in Rengma, correctly pronouncing these nasals becomes difficult. The ways these nasals are pronounced in different environments deserve special attention, so a discussion of Nzang nasals is deferred to a later section. As for the letter *h*, we find it primarily used to represent a checked syllable.

The letters *t*, *d*, *s*, and *z* are articulated from the dental position and transcribed here with the same symbols but without the bridge [̣] below. Aspiration in Rengma, as in all Naga languages, is phonemic, and the digraphs *kh*, *ph*, and *th* represent the aspirated stops. *Rh* and *yh* are not aspirates: the former is the devoiced alveolar trill /ɾ̥/, while the latter is pronounced approximately as the voiced palatal fricative /j/. Additionally, we have *ch* as the orthographic equivalent of the voiceless postalveolar affricate /tʃ/ and *ts* as the equivalent of its voiceless dental counterpart /ts/. Rengma *pv*, *phv*, and *bv* are labiodental affricates transcribed here as /pf/, /pfh/, and /bv/. The voiced palatal non-sibilant affricate is /ɟj/; it transcribes the digraph *jv*. Its voiceless counterpart, *chv* /cç/, is unique to Nzon Tseminyu khwen. Another digraph, *mv* = /mj/, sometimes occurs in Rengma Tseminyu dialect (e.g. *-mvü* ‘particle marking the plain negative’) but never in Rengma Terüpvunyu, unless one follows the spelling system of the other dialect and imitates their way of pronouncing words. The Tseminyu dialect also has a few other non-sibilant affricates, a pair of coarticulated consonants, and a lateral approximant (see fn. 6).

Turning to the vowels makes *e* somewhat problematic because, as we shall note, it can represent /ə/ just as it can represent /e/. One writes *i* as the equivalent of /i/, but in some words, it is pronounced as /e/. In Rengma, as in most Naga languages, the symbol *ü* or ‘*u*’ with a combining diaeresis is used for the sixth vowel.

## 5. Segmental and suprasegmental phonology

### 5.1 Segmental phonology

This subsection briefly describes the segmental phonology of Nzang Terüpvunyu khwen, identifying the various discrete segments, vowels, and consonants, which form the basis of its sound system.

#### 5.1.1 Vowels

The inventory of Nzang Terüpvunyu vowels is simple and consists of /i, e, a, ə, o, u/, categorised into two front vowels, two back vowels and two central vowels. We have same number of vowels in the other dialect. The vowels can be differentiated based on tongue height as close, close-mid, close-open, and open. There are no long vowels in either dialect.

	Front	Central	Back
Close	i		u
Close-mid	e		o
Close-open		ə	
Open		a	

Of these vowels, /o/ is realised as a close-open back, not a close-mid back vowel, when it follows segments other than labial and should be represented as [ɔ] in phonetic transcription. The sixth vowel, represented as *ü*, is transcribed as /ə/; it is realised allophonically as [ə] in checked syllables and [ɐ] in open syllables: *gwün* /gwən/ [gwənɬ] ‘shoot with a gun’, *hüh* /həʔ/ [həʔɬ] ‘fur; hair’, *rün* /rən/ [rənɬ] ‘cover utensil with lid’, *abiün* /ä.bən/

[aɪbənɪ] ‘chaff; husk’, *gü* /gə/ → [gəɪ] ‘ginger’, *hü* /hə/ → [həɪ] ‘stay; remain’, *rü* /rə/ → [rəɪ] ‘come’, and *ahü* /ä.hə/ → [aɪhəɪ] ‘tooth’. The vowel in the prefixes *ke-* and *te-* is pronounced as /ə/ [ə]: *keben* /kə.bě/ [kəɪbəɪ] ‘light; lamp’, *kehong* /kə.hō/ [kəɪhōɪ] ‘meeting’, *kekhyü* /kə.khjə/ [kəɪk<sup>h</sup>jəɪ] ‘smoke’, *tebo* /tə.bó/ [təɪboɪ] ‘pig’, *teken* /tə.kē/ [təɪkēɪ] ‘dhole’, and *tekü* /tə.kə/ [təɪkəɪ] ‘nine’. As for the vowel *e*, it is pronounced, as already noted, as /e/ in some words and /ə/ in others. When asked if the sound is /ə/, why then write *e*? The answer was as follows: in spelling the English word ‘the’, one writes the letter *e* but pronounces it as /ə/, not as /e/.

Because /ə/ is the very sound Rengmas make when pronouncing the letter they write as *ü*, the latter can be consistently used in spelling to avoid confusing it with *e*. Compare the spelling and pronunciation of words that the two dialects have in their everyday vocabulary.

Terü	<i>chü</i>	/tʃə/	Tsem	<i>chyü</i>	/tʃjə/	‘help’
	<i>chindeh shah</i>	/tʃin.dəʔ ʃáʔ/		<i>chiündünsha</i>	/tʃän.də.ʃáʔ/	‘fig’
	<i>kenhi</i>	/kəŋ.hì/		<i>künhi</i>	/kəŋ.hì/	‘cool breeze; wind’
	<i>phe(t)</i>	/phəʔ ~ /phəʔ/		<i>phü</i>	/phəʔ/	‘uproot a tree’
	<i>men</i>	/mən/		<i>mün</i>	/mən/	‘mouth’
	<i>reyhyü</i>	/rə.j(j)ə/		<i>rühu</i>	/rə.hu/	‘steal’
	<i>whetche</i>	/məʔ.tʃé/ ~ /məʔ.tʃé/		<i>whütse</i>	/məʔ.tsé/	‘suddenly’

Some Nzang Terüpvunyu words where native speakers are known to alternate *e* and *ü*, although these words are few, demonstrate how spelling reform could correct inconsistencies in the system. The said vowel alternation is evident in the following examples: *gwen* ~ *gwün* /gwən/ ‘shoot with a gun’, *gwenkho* ~ *gwünkho* /gwən.kho/ ‘time’, and *thügwen* ~ *thügwün* /thə.gwən/ ‘lard’.

Of the six vowels, only /a/ appears in the initial position, but the examples in the present paper, besides those in the word list, illustrate that /a/ is a prefix in all cases. No word in Rengma begins with any of the other five vowels. Non-initially, the six vowels /i, e, a, ə, o, u/ appear in open syllables.

<i>da</i>	/də/	‘also’	<i>sha</i>	/ʃa/	‘know’
<i>de</i>	/de/	‘what’	<i>she</i>	/ʃe/	‘die’
<i>di</i>	/di/	‘water’	<i>shi</i>	/ʃi/	‘wash (utensils)’
<i>do</i>	/dó/	‘weave yarn’	<i>sho</i>	/ʃo/	‘love’ (v.)
<i>du</i>	/du/	‘layer’ (v.)	<i>shu</i>	/ʃü/	‘who’
<i>dü</i>	/dä/	‘hoe’	<i>shü</i>	/ʃə/	‘the moon’

Minimal sets with checked or closed syllables, or even those with only nasal codas, are notoriously elusive, partly because syllables do not frequently end in /t/ or /ʔ/ and partly because native speakers tend to interchange nasal rhymes with rhymes that end in nasalised vowels. Nevertheless, there are examples to illustrate that nasalised vowels or nasalised rhymes also provide a contrast similar to that of minimal sets with open rhymes.

/-pā/	<i>tepang</i>	/tə.pā/	‘hoolock gibbon’
/-pě/	<i>mpeng</i>	/m̩.pě/	‘rice straw’
/-pĩ/	<i>pha-ping</i>	/phá.pĩ/ ~ /phá.pě/ ~ /phá.peŋ/	‘anklet’
/-pǝ/	<i>mahpong</i>	/máʔ.pǝ/ ~ /máʔ.pəŋ/ n.	‘cigarette’
/-pũ/	<i>hempung</i>	/həm.pũ/	‘fifty’

Less than half a dozen words contain the diphthongs /ai/, /əi/, and /iə/. There is no compelling logic behind their existence in the dialect. The first appears in only one lexeme, *ainyu* /äi.nju/ ‘cat’, while the other ends the word *müi* /məi/ ‘medicine’. Some speakers of both dialects pronounce the native word for ‘squirrel’ as /j̩ə/, but most say it should be /j̩ə/, whether the word is spelt *yeü*, *yüe*, or even *eyü*. In Rengma Tseminyu, the word *yie* ‘thousand’ is pronounced as /j̩iə/ or /j̩ə/. Its Tenyidie (Angami) equivalent is *nyie*. Typically, Nzang khwen favours monophthongs over diphthongs, as shown by the monophthongisation it has carried out in loanwords such as *tosari* /tó.sá.rì/ ‘common mynah’ (Dimasa *daosari*) and *toperi* /tó.pə.rì/ ~ *topri* /tó.pri/ ‘pigeon’ (Dimasa *daophri*). In the Tseminyu dialect, the word for ‘banana’ is *thai* /tháiʔ/. Its Assam Rengma equivalent is *thayeh* /tha.jəʔ/, with the palatal glide inserted between /a/ and /i/ → /ə/. A few more words in this dialect may contain the diphthongs /ai/ and /əi/, but they would also be exceptions.



### 5.1.2 Consonants

Assam Rengma consonants have nine positions: some are articulated with complete constriction in the vocal tract, some with partial constriction, and some with no constriction. The table below compiles the various consonant phonemes to provide a brief overview of a part of the segmental inventory for this dialect.<sup>6</sup>

Nzang Terüpvunyu Consonants

	Labial	Labio-dental	Dental	Alveolar	Post-alveolar	Palatal	Labio-velar	Velar	Glottal
Plosive	p ph b		t th d					k kh g	ʔ
Affricate		pf pfh bv	ts		tʃ dʒ	(tʃ)			
Fricative			s z		ʃ	j			h
Trill				ɾ r					
Approximant	w					j	ɰ		
Lateral				l					
Nasal	(m̥) m		n					ŋ	

Brackets enclose rare phonemes.

The plosive series offers voicing and aspiration contrasts. There are no sonant aspirates in Rengma. Some voiceless affricates have aspirated counterparts, but the contrast in this series is primarily between voiced and voiceless pairs. The dental sibilant /z/ and the alveolar trill /r/ also have their voiceless counterparts. It is important to note that phonemes show voicing and/or aspiration contrast only in the syllable-initial position.

/p/—/ph/—/b/	/pì/	‘head’	/phi/	‘see’	/bì/	‘taro’
	/ṃ.pé/	‘rice straw’	/tó.phé/	‘duck’	/ṃ.bé/	‘hand’
/t/—/th/—/d/	/tá/	‘eat’	/thá/	‘do; make’	/dà/	‘hoe’
	/tàn/	‘grab’	/thón/	‘walking stick’	/dàn/	a pluraliser
/k/—/kh/—/g/	/ká/	‘climb’	/khá/	‘sweep’	/gà/	‘ginger’
	/kwàn/	‘corner’	/khwán/	‘hole’	/gwàn/	‘shoot with a gun’
/pf/—/pfh/—/bv/	/pfú/	‘wear (shirt)’	/pfhú/	‘look for sth’	/bvú/	‘beat’
	/tə.pfú/	‘rat’	/kə.pfhu/	‘counting’	/ṃ.bvú/	‘a species of bird’
/tʃ/—/dʒ/	/tʃo/	‘stone’			/dʒo/	‘speak’
	/kə.tʃi/	‘alcoholic drink’			/kə.dʒi/	sleep
/s/—/z/	/ṇ.sé/	‘waist’			/thə.zé/	‘barking deer’
	/à.sá/	‘wing (of a bird)’			/hə.zə/	‘molar’
/ɾ/—/r/	/ɾó/	‘scold’			/rò/	‘burn’
	/ʃə.ɾən/	‘happy’			/tə.rən/	‘poison’

An audible release is a common feature of all word-initial plosives in Rengma. The approach of a plosive is particularly prominent when it appears in another syllable to the right of /ə/, mainly when /ə/ occurs in prefixes or when the same plosive stands after a syllabic nasal prefix. Equally prominent is the ‘catch’ phase of an affricate occurring in syllables following the prefixes mentioned above. In Nzang khwen, /t/ is the only plosive in the coda position and has no audible release. However, this non-initial *t* is unstable, and speakers alternate it with the glottal stop. In the coda of the penult, /t/ tends to be replaced by the glottal stop. Examples are *nnye(t)* /ṇ.njə̀t/ ~ /ṇ.njə̀ʔ/ ‘sweet’, *phe(t)* /phə̀t/ ~ /phə̀ʔ/ ‘uproot a tree or plant’, and *whetche* /mə́ʔ.tʃé/ ‘suddenly’. In the Tseminyu dialect, *t* does not appear in the coda position; however, the checked syllable is easily detected when speakers pronounce the equivalents of the same words – *nnyeu* /ṇ.njə̀ʔ/, *phü* /phə̀ʔ/, and *whütse* /mə́ʔ.tsé/.

<sup>6</sup> In the inventory for the language, not just this dialect, one would have to include four other non-sibilant affricates, *chv* /cç/, *kv* /kx/, *khv* /kxh/, and *gv* /gy/, two coarticulated consonants *shv* /ʃf/ and *hv* /hf/, and the lateral approximant *lv* /l/. Examples from the Tseminyu dialect are *chvü* /cçə/ ‘cooked rice’, *kvumvü* /kxü.mə̀/ ‘weak’, *tsekhvu* /tsə.kxhu/ ‘grasshopper’, *tegvu* /tə.gyü/ ‘crow; raven’, *nshvu* /ṇ.ʃfú/ ‘fear; be afraid’, *seünhvu* /sə́ṇ.hfū/ ‘bush’, and *alvuka* /ä.lú.kä/ ‘in the middle’. The labiodental fricative *v* /v/ also occurs in the same dialect: *levü* /lè.və̀/ or *tholevü* /thó.lè.və̀/ ‘bow’ (cf. Terü *lūbu* ‘arrow’).

A subsequent section cites some exceptional cases of /r/ or /l/ in the coda.

The three nasals, /m/, /n/, and /ŋ/, are articulated from positions corresponding to the places of articulation of the labial, dental, and velar plosives. They appear at the beginning of the word, but the changes they undergo in the syllable coda deserve detailed discussion in separate sections, not here. The palatal nasal /ɲ/, which Marrison (1967, II:365) treats as the phonemic equivalent of what is written as *ny*, does not exist in either the Tseminyu or Terüpvunyu dialects of Rengma. Rengma *ny* is a complex onset, one of many C + y clusters (*py*, *phy*, *ty*, *thy*, *ky*, *khy*, *gy*, *chy*, *my*, *ly*, *shy*, *tsy*) in the language (see section 6.1.1).

### 5.1.3 Glottal stop

The glottal stop in Nsang Terüpvunyu khwen occurs only as a syllable-final segment and is indicated with an *h* at the end of a word.<sup>7</sup> Removing this *h* does not mean making a spelling mistake as long as the meaning is clear. Examples of words ending in *h* are *chih* /tʃɪʔ/ ‘sting’, *heh* /héʔ/ ‘ask’, *kedah* /kə.dàʔ/ ‘big; great’, *kenromah* /kən.rò.màʔ/ ‘wildfire’, *pheh* /phèʔ/ ‘cloth’, *mah* /máʔ/ ‘fire’, and *terüh* /tə.rəʔ/ ‘cane; rattan’.

In the spelling system currently used in Rengma Tseminyu khwen, a final *h* usually is not written to indicate a checked syllable (e.g. *keda* /kə.dàʔ/ ‘big’, *phi* /phìʔ/ ‘cloth’, and *thünsha* /thón.ʃáʔ/ ‘papaya’): this, however, is not necessarily the rule and a typical, albeit rare, example of a word ending in *h* is *mah* /máʔ/ ‘fire’. This word is written the same way in the *Kenshün Lesü*, the Rengma Bible: *Tsügenyu a le mah nipe Tyre nyida chwida gen shü-o a-chwida kekhwen roshye lati* ‘But I will send a fire on the wall of Tyrus, which shall devour the places thereof’ (Amos 1:10) and *A le mah khiphe kazü hinyu shü titse ryü...* ‘I am come to send fire on the earth...’ (Luke 12:49). Among a few other words in which the author’s chief Tseminyu consultant has used a word-final *h* are *menzoh* /mẽ.zóʔ/ ‘leopard’ and *kejah* /kə.dzàʔ/ ‘shame; dishonour’. In the *Kenshün Lesü*, the same carnivore is called *menhon*, e.g. *Anyugun keru le menhon deng nyeki-e nmhe kvu...* ‘Their horses are also swifter than the leopards...’ (Habakkuk 1:8). As for the word *kejah*, it is pretty common in the Rengma (Tseminyu) translation of the Bible. One example should suffice for now: *Thakesha gü le teshwe pvüti, ayi kepho gü we kejah kepvü hyu loti* ‘The wise shall inherit glory; but shame shall be the promotion of fools’ (*Keshajol* Proverbs 3.35).

The glottal stop also occurs in the penult and antepenult in Assam Rengma words: *kenyahnyu* /kə.njàʔ.nju/ ‘the rich’, *kedahgi* /kə.dàʔ.gi/ ‘queen’, *phehlu* /phèʔ.lú/ ‘cockroach’, *mahgi* /máʔ.gi/ ‘charcoal’, and *mahnen* /máʔ.né/ ‘flambeau’. Sometimes, the letter *h* is dropped from the interior of a word as spelt, despite the presence of the glottal stop. An excellent example is the word *Terüpvunyu* ‘relating to a place where canes grow well’ (the Rengma name for Assam),<sup>8</sup> formed of *terüh* /tə.rəʔ/ ‘cane’, *pvu* /pfü/ ‘area where something grows well’, and the postpositive *nyu* /nju/ ‘relating to’. Though an *-h-* is not written, the word is pronounced /tə.rəʔ.pfə.nju/.

We have cases where the letters *h* and *k* are used interchangeably in the spelling, but their pronunciation is the same: *sekko* ~ *sehko* /səʔ.ko/ [səʔʔkəʔ] ‘uncooked rice’ and *rekkyü* ~ *rehkhyü* /rəʔ.khjá/ [rəʔʔkʰjəʔ] ‘a large basket’. The previous section provided examples where the letter *t* indicates a glottal stop.

## 5.2 Suprasegmental phonology

Tonemes show a three-way contrast in the Terüpvunyu and Tseminyu dialects of Rengma. That said, the illustrations provided are from the dialect that interests us here. Three level tones – low [˩], mid [˨˩], and high [˥] – occur in open syllables, including those containing nasalised vowels.

<i>che</i>	/tʃè/	[tʃe˩]	‘wash’	<i>khwen</i>	/khwè/	[kʰwè˩]	‘waiting’
	/tʃe/	[tʃe˨˩]	‘hundred’		/khwě/	[kʰwě˨˩]	‘language’
	/tʃé/	[tʃe˥]	‘stamp’		/khwé/	[kʰwé˥]	‘leaf’

<sup>7</sup> Sometimes an *-h* is added to a syllable, especially a prefix, for no good reason. Examples of words in which one of the author’s consultants used *-h* are *akehshu* ‘edible fat’, *kehrehshu* ‘worship’, *ketehzang* ‘plains; valley’, *rehhyü* ‘steal’ *tehrashah* ‘fruit’. When asked why he used, for example, an *-h* after *re-*, as in the word *rehhyü*, the explanation was utterly implausible: if one does not write the letter *h* here, the author was told that the pronunciation of *re* will be like /re/, not /rə/.

<sup>8</sup> The meaning of *Terüpvunyu* would also be of interest to folk etymologists. *Nsang Terüpvunyu* means ‘the Rengmas (Nsangnyu) of the place where cane grows well’ or, more directly, ‘the Rengmas of Assam’. Mills (1937:2, fn.1) learnt from his consultant that the ‘Mikir Hills Rengmas’ (or ‘Assam Rengmas’ as we call them now) were called *Nzong teri phenyu* ‘cane-path Rengmas’ because ‘their path of migration led through the dense cane jungle bordering the plains’. In a literal translation, ‘Nzong Teri phenyu’ would mean ‘the Nzangnyu or Rengmas of the villages where cane grows’. *Phen* means ‘village’. Giren Sebü (2006:2) explained the term ‘Njang Terüpvunyu’ as ‘cane carriers Rengmas’, interpreting *pvü* to be a verb denoting the meaning ‘carry on the back’. In many places in the same book, Sebü also spells the word as *Terü pvu nyu* or *Terüpvunyu*. John Setbü Rengma, who has been mentioned earlier, preferred the spelling *Teryüpvünyu*.

<i>nyi</i>	/n̥jì/	[n̥ji˧]	‘hear; listen’	<i>swen</i>	/swě̃/	[swě̃˧]	‘workplace’
	/n̥ji/	[n̥ji˧]	‘laugh’		/swě̃/	[swě̃˧]	‘oath’
	/n̥jɪ/	[n̥ji˧]	‘tongue’		/swě̃/	[swě̃˧]	‘sow; plant’

The same tonemes also appear in syllables that end in nasals.

<i>jen</i>	/dʒən/	[dʒən˧]	‘strike with the fist’	<i>nen</i>	/nən/	[nən˧]	‘thread’
	/dʒən/	[dʒən˧]	comitative marker		/nən/	[nən˧]	‘cook curry’
	/dʒón/	[dʒən˧]	‘begin; start’		/nón/	[nən˧]	‘send’

Low tone is perceived in syllables ending in /t/, while syllables with a glottal stop in the coda position can carry a low or a high tone. Rengma /-t/ is unstable as a coda segment, and speakers alternate it with /-ʔ/.

<i>phe(t)</i>	/phət/	[pʰət˧]	‘uproot’	<i>hüh</i>	/həʔ/	[həʔ˧]	‘fur; hair’
	/phəʔ/	[pʰəʔ˧]		<i>joh</i>	/dʒòʔ/	[dʒòʔ˧]	‘net’
<i>qwet</i>	/kwət/	[kwət˧]		<i>cheh</i>	/tʃéʔ/	[tʃéʔ˧]	‘salt’
	/kwəʔ/	[kwəʔ˧]	‘sugarcane’	<i>mah</i>	/máʔ/	[maʔ˧]	‘fire’

Pronominal prefixes, which can also appear as free morphemes, have three allotones corresponding to low, mid and high tones. When a pronominal prefix, also the genitive form of a pronoun, is added to a root, it copies the tone suprasegment of the root. Examples are –

<i>zu</i>	/zù/	[zu˧]	‘mother’	<i>azu</i>	/à.zù/	[a˧zu˧]	‘my mother’
				<i>ahi zu</i>	/à.hi zù/	[a˧hi˧ zu˧]	‘our (du.gen) mother’
				<i>ngzu</i>	/ṇ.zù/	[ṇ˧zu˧]	‘your (sgl.gen) mother’
				<i>ligi zu</i>	/li.gi zù/	[li˧gi˧ zu˧]	‘her mother’
<i>da</i>	/dá/	[da˧]	‘uncle’ (FeB)	<i>ada</i>	/á.dá/	[a˧da˧]	‘my uncle’
				<i>ngda</i>	/ṇ.dá/	[ṇ˧da˧]	‘your (sgl.gen) uncle’
				<i>ligü da</i>	/lí.gə dá/	[li˧gə˧ da˧]	‘your (sgl.gen) uncle’
<i>ka</i>	/ka/	[ka˧]	‘house’	<i>ahi ka</i>	/a.hi ka/	[a˧hi˧ ka˧]	‘our (du.gen) house’
				<i>nghi ka</i>	/ṇ.hi ka/	[ṇ˧hi˧ ka˧]	‘your (du.gen) house’
				<i>nggong ka</i>	/ṇ.gõ ka/	[ṇ˧gõ˧ ka˧]	‘your (pl.gen) house’
				<i>liyhu ka</i>	/li.ju ka/	[li˧ju˧ ka˧]	‘their (du.gen) house’

Non-pronominal prefixes *a-* and *n-* and nominalising prefix *ke-* carry a stable low tone: *akepvu* /à.kə.pfú/ [a˧kə˧pfu˧] ‘bud’, *ashe* /à.ʃé/ [a˧ʃé˧] ‘gall bladder’, *nmenchen* /ṇ.mən.tʃən/ [ṇ˧mən˧tʃən˧] ‘body’, *nthen* /ṇ.thən/ [ṇ˧tʰən˧] ‘jump’, *nphu* /ṇ.phu/ [ṇ˧pʰu˧] ‘alligator’, *keshen* /kə.ʃé/ [kə˧ʃé˧] ‘small’, and *ketsebu* /kə.tse.bu/ [kə˧tse˧bu˧] ‘tongs; scissors’. For a more detailed discussion on these and other prefixes, see section 7.

## 6. Phonotactics

### 6.1 Syllable

A single unit that can be divided into segmental and suprasegmental positions is how one might describe the syllable in Rengma. It can be sequenced as (C<sub>1</sub>)(L)V(C<sub>2</sub>)T, with C<sub>1</sub>(L) as the onset, comprising an initial consonant C<sub>1</sub> and an optional liquid (L). There are also zero-onset syllables. V is the obligatory nucleus, C<sub>2</sub> is the optional coda, and T is the tone on the syllable. G, representing a glide, could be used instead of L, but the substitution would not represent the rare instances of initial clusters with a medial *-r-*. This structure, with four segment positions and one suprasegment, is basic in Rengma and does not change in the two dialects. The vowel is marked for high and low tones. Vowels carrying the mid-tone are unmarked. A Rengma syllable with all four segments and the tone suprasegment in their ideal positions would be *qwet* /kwət/ ~ /kwəʔ/ ‘sugarcane’.

While (C<sub>1</sub>)(L)V(C<sub>2</sub>)T can be considered the basic structure of the Naga syllable, the different Tibeto-Burman languages of Nagaland show marked differences apropos of the positions in which some segments appear, and some do not. Marrison’s comparative table of syllabic features in Naga (1967, I:24) shows that many languages of the so-called ‘Naga’ group do not use initial clusters, while some do not have words that end in consonants.

### 6.1.1. Onset

The onset can be simple or complex. All consonants contained in the inventory (*see* section 5.1.2) except for the glottal stop appear in the initial position of the syllable. The uvular fricative /q/ is absent from the Rengma language, although certain words are spelt with *qw-* at the beginning. Some Assam Rengmas write some words with an initial *x*, even though the velar fricative /x/ does not occur in their dialect. An example is *xeki* ‘bank of a river or stream’: this word is pronounced /sè.kì/ with an initial /s/, and the usual spelling, not surprisingly, is *seki*. Rare consonants in the simple onset include *wh* /ɰ/, *jv* /jʃ/, and, oddly enough, *w*.

<i>jv</i>	/jʃ/	<i>kenjvu</i>	/kəŋ.jju/	‘green’
<i>wh</i>	/ɰ/	<i>whu</i>	/ɰú/	a variant of <i>hu</i> /hú/ ‘face’
		<i>whet</i>	/ɰət/ ~ /ɰətʔ/	an onomatopoeic word for the sound you hear when something whizzes past. (Not included in the word list)
		<i>kewhen</i>	/kə.ɰé/	‘play; sport’
<i>w</i>	/w/	<i>-we</i>	/we/	a variant of the nominative marker ( <i>see</i> <i>le</i> <sup>1</sup> in the word list)

The spelling *wayeng* sometimes used instead of *gwayeng* for the Nzang equivalent of ‘bamboo raft’ is far from usual, and the speakers with whom the author interacted pronounced it as /gwá.jě/, with an initial /gw-/ , not /w-/. Although the word *gwa* may not directly refer to ‘bamboo’ in Rengma, the compound nouns describing various bamboo species use *gwa* or its shortened form, *gü*, e.g. *gwaterang* /gwá.tə.rá/, *güyang* /gə.já/, and *güshü* /gə.jə/. No words in the list begin with /w/, and no polysyllabic words have non-initial syllables beginning with it. Any affixes or postpositives with single /w/ other than the one shown in the table are unknown.

Complex onsets with the medial /w/ and /j/ are extremely common in Rengma. Note that there are no triadic consonant clusters in the language. A few examples showing the allowed types of dyadic clusters should suffice.

stop	+ glide	<i>pyen</i>	/pjən/	‘bridge’	<i>chepwen</i>	/tʃe.pwé/	‘tribe’
		<i>phyen</i>	/phjən/	‘throw’	<i>aphwen</i>	/ə.phwé/	lungs
		<i>byen</i>	/bjé/	‘tie a rope’	<i>bwennyen</i>	/bwè.njè/	‘soft; gentle’
fricative	+ glide	<i>kensyu</i>	/kən.sju/	‘heavy’	<i>tuswen</i>	/tu.swé/	‘granary’
		<i>shyu</i>	/ʃju/	‘trumpet’	<i>kenshwen</i>	/kəŋ.fwé/	‘early’
affricate	+ glide	<i>chyen</i>	/tʃjé/	‘year’	<i>chwen</i>	/tʃwé/	‘bend’
		–	–	–	<i>jwen</i>	/dʒwé/	‘sell’
nasal	+ glide	<i>myu</i>	/mju/	‘spear’	<i>nmwe</i>	/ŋ.mwé/	‘if’
		<i>nyen</i>	/njé/	‘flower’	–	–	–
liquid	+ glide	–	–	–	<i>nrweng</i>	/ŋ.rwé/	‘wrist’
		<i>lyü</i>	/ljə/	‘be wet’	–	–	–

Clusters with medial /l/ are absent, while those with medial /r/ are particularly rare. Complex onsets with *w* /w/, *wh* /ɰ/, and *y* /j/ as the first consonant segment are also absent from the Rengma syllable.

Assam Rengma consonant clusters

→ Medial ↓ Initial	w			j			r		
p ph b	pw	phw	bw	pj	phj	bj	(pr)	(phr)	–
t th d	tw	–	dw	(ty)	thj	dj	–	–	(dr)
k kh g	kw	khw	gw	kj	khj	gj	–	–	–
ts tʃ dʒ	–	tʃw	dʒw	tsj	tʃj	–	–	–	–
s z ʃ	sw	–	ʃw	sj	–	ʃj	–	–	–
j	–	–	–	–	(jj)	–	–	–	–
q h	–	–	–	–	(hj)	–	–	–	–
ɣ r l	–	rw	–	–	(rj)	lj	–	–	–
m n	mw	–	–	mj	nj	–	–	–	–

Rare clusters are enclosed in brackets.

Clusters within round brackets were detected in the variations individuals made when the words containing them were produced in isolation; however, pronunciation changes occurred when the same words were used in finite word strings. Most speakers pronounced the word for ‘eye’ as /hé.tə/. Some insisted it should be /hé.tjə/, emphasising the glide, but still pronounced it as /hé.tə/ or /jə.tə/ in the sentence /ḥ.hé.tə tʃi le ṁ.mən.tʃən kə.bè/ ~ /ḥ.jə.tə tʃi le ṁ.mən.tʃən kə.bè/ = *Nhetü chi le ng-menchen keben* ‘The eye is the lamp of your body’ (Luke 11.34).<sup>9</sup> In the Tseminyu dialect, they spell the word for ‘eye’ as *yhiutyü* and pronounce it /jə.tjə/.

Though rare, the *ty* /tj/ cluster appears in some citation forms and word strings in the Tseminyu dialect. Words beginning with *ty* are hard to come by in Assam Rengma unless individual speakers try to pronounce a word like *tü* ‘eat’ as /tjə/. Similarly, one might pronounce the equivalent word for ‘come’ as /rjə/ and that for ‘tooth’ as /hjə/, as Rengma speakers in Tseminyu often do, rather than pronouncing them as /rə/ and /hə/, respectively. Nonetheless, in the Terüpvunyu dialect, words with complex onsets like /hj/, /tj/, and /rj/ may still exist. The cluster /jj/ in *reyhyü* /rə.jjə/ ‘steal’ and *kerehyü* /kə.rə.jjə/ ‘thief’ remained intact in citation forms; however, the case of the palatal glide in both words was not convincing when consultants read sentences containing them. *Nchennyugü le gwa swa aye dethüka ging nde lo chiyo tu rehyü hü nyo* /ḥ.tʃən.njü.gə le gwa swa à.jè de.thə.kà gín ṁ.dè lo tʃi.jò tu rə.j(j)ə hə njə/ ‘The boy is nice but steals food when hungry’ and ‘Police’-*nyu le nthü kerehyü ten lo* /pu.lis.nju le ṁ.thjə kə.rə.j(j)ə tən lo/ ‘The police arrested the thief today’.

It has already been mentioned that clusters with a medial /r/ are rare in Rengma. Two of the three words with /-r-/ in the word list are loans. Available data from the dialect show slight differences in the spelling and pronunciation of the native word for ‘pigeon’, *toperi* /tó.pə.rì/ ~ *topri* /tó.pri/ (cf. Dimasa *daophri*), with vowel epenthesis and simultaneous resyllabification in one variant. The word *senphrang* /sè.phrǎ/ ~ /sèm.phràn/ ‘onion’ is also a loan and preserves the cluster in the ultima of Dimasa *samphrang*. They call the ‘spider’ *kentero* in the Nzon Tseminyu dialect. Its Nzang Terüpvunyu equivalent is *bendro*, pronounced /bèn.drò/.

### 6.1.2 Vowel and coda

Rhymes ending in /ŋ/ or /n/ have /ə/ as the obligatory segment. When rhymes contain vowels other than /ə/, the same nasals tend to disappear after nasalising the vowels. The velar nasal /ŋ/ occurs after /i, e, a, o/, but data show that female speakers are more likely to nasalise the preceding vowel rather than keeping the nasal coda intact. No examples of the rhyme /-uŋ/ occurs in the Nzang Terüpvunyu words listed here. The equivalents of ‘five’ and ‘fifty’ are *pung* and *hempung*, pronounced /pũ/ and /hem.pũ/. Final /t/ is unstable, and, as mentioned in section 5.1.2, speakers alternate it with the glottal stop. Two consonants other than /t/ occur sporadically in the coda: *narikol shah* /na.ri.kol ʃáʔ/ ‘coconut’ (Assamese *নাৰিকল nārikal* /na.ri.kɒl/) and *agür pithong* /à.gər pì.thò/ ‘hoopoe’. Checked syllables with the glottal stop have already been discussed in section 5.1.3.

The table below shows the distribution pattern for syllables ending in nasals.

	-n		-m		-ŋ	
	penult/ antepenult	ultima	penult/ antepenult	ultima	penult/ antepenult	ultima
i	-in*	—	—	—	-iŋ*	-iŋ*
e	-en*	—	-em*	—	-eŋ*	-eŋ*
o	-on*	—	-om*	—	-oŋ*	-oŋ*
ə	-ən	-ən	-əm	—	-əŋ	-əŋ
a	-an*	—	-am*	-am (rare)	-aŋ*	-aŋ*

The asterisk \* indicates that codas tend to be omitted in favour of nasalised vowels in these combinations.

The bilabial nasal only occurs in the rhyme of *gwam* /gwàm/ ‘bad’, resulting from apocopation of the final segment of *gwamu* /gwa.mù/ and a simultaneous resyllabification of the word. Interestingly, the word *gwamu*, which derives from *gwa kemu* /gwa kə.mù/, is used in formal language. In the coda position of syllables other than the ultima, /m/ appears by regressive assimilation alone. (See section 8.2).

<sup>9</sup> The Rengma Bible is written in the dialect that the Rengmas speak in Tseminyu. With the help of the author’s Assam Rengma consultants, translations of verses from the Old and New Testaments have been made into the Terüpvunyu dialect. This paper explicitly mentions where J.S. Rengma’s translation of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John into the same Rengma dialect is referenced.

Since a separate section is devoted to nasalisation in Rengma, only the stable codas that male and female speakers have kept intact when pronouncing the words containing them are presented here.

	penult/antepenult	gloss	ultima	gloss
-ən	<i>kentsodi</i> /kən.tsò.di/	‘dew drops’	<i>agwen, agwiün</i> /à.gwèn/	‘lardon’
	<i>techendi</i> /tə.tʃən.di/	‘oil’	<i>kejen</i> /kə.dʒən/	‘blow; punch’
-əm	<i>nsenpvu</i> /n̩.səm.pfu/	‘forehead’	–	–
	<i>senmeren</i> /səm.mə.rɛ̃/	‘garlic’	–	–
-əŋ	<i>chenkenbü</i> /tʃən.kəm.bə/	‘storm’	<i>kensheng</i> /kən.ʃəŋ/	‘three’
	<i>teshengki</i> /tə.ʃəŋ.ki/	‘below; under’	<i>kedasheng</i> /kə.da.ʃəŋ/	a salutation

Section 4 compares some Rengma words from its two dialects. Despite phonological differences between the dialects, there are many cases of similarity apropos of the omission of nasal codas in favour of nasalised vowels. Compare Terü *gwen* /gwɛ̃/ ‘cut with one stroke’, *hikang* /hi.kã/ ‘nose’, *kechang* /kə.tʃã/ ‘white’, *nyiten* /n̩.tɛ̃/ ‘ear’, and *tsang* /tsã/ ‘road’ with Tsem *gwen* /gwɛ̃/, *yhinkon* /j̩ŋ.kõ/, *kechon* /kə.tʃõ/, *nyetin* /n̩.tĩ/, and *tson* /tsõ/.

## 7. The word

Here we could look at the structure of words in Assam Rengma before discussing the phonological process inside the word boundary.

Monosyllabic verbs are common: *bvu* /bvú/ ‘beat; strike’, *chi* /tʃi/ ‘drink’, *chwen* /tʃwɛ̃/ ‘bend’, *gü* /gə/ ‘go’, *hü* /hə/ ‘chase animals out; chase away intruders’, *nyu* /njü/ ‘grind’, *phye* /phjé/ ‘lay out; unroll’, and *tü* /tə/ ‘eat’. Disyllabic and some trisyllabic verbs also exist: *chwentse* /tʃwɛ̃.tsé/ ‘break something by bending it’, *hedi* /hé.dí/ ‘have a liking to someone’, *kalu* /kà.lù/ ‘marry’, *khilota* /khi.lò.tà/ ‘take something from some place’, *tsega* /tsə.gá/ ‘chew’, and *shenreshu* /ʃən.rə.ʃú/ ‘beg’. Many verbs, including some prefixed roots and denominatives, will add a syllabic nasal at the beginning, e.g. *nchen* /n̩.tʃɛ̃/ ‘serve’, *nhi* /n̩.hi/ ‘forget’, *nkyu* /n̩.kju/ ‘lie; speak falsely’, *nnyu* /n̩.njü/ ‘born’, *nkhwen* /n̩.khwɛ̃/ ‘stack firewood in piles’, and *nshah* /n̩.ʃà/ ‘bear fruit’.

Some nouns are monosyllabic. Generally, Rengma nouns will add a non-pronominal prefix in their citation forms. For example, a native speaker can understand that *bang* /bã/ means ‘grandfather’. However, one should write *abang* /à.bã/ instead of just *bang* to create a lexical entry. The pronominalised form *abang* ‘my grandfather’, written like the citation form, shows the prefix copying the tone from the root: /à.bã/.

In Rengma, nouns are usually di- or trisyllabic and rarely polysyllabic. Some trisyllabic and polysyllabic nouns are compounds denoting objects of the same class. For example, the *chen* ‘sky’ class consists of words like *chenbü*, *chenkenbü*, and *chenkenpye* (see section 8.2). Similarly, *günyon*, *güshü*, *güyang* and *gwaterang* form the ‘bamboo’ class (see section 6.1.1). Although prefixes are the focus of this section, we will take a slight detour to discuss the formation of nouns by suffixation. The suffix *-den* is used to form the plural of animals, as found in the word list under *aden*<sup>1</sup>. Plural and collective nouns representing people are formed by adding the postpositives *dyu* and *nyu*, e.g. *ponyu dyu* /pò.njü dju/ ‘young men; a group of young men’ (sgl. *ponyu*), *lünnyu dyu* /lən.njü dju/ ‘maidens; young girls’ (sgl. *lünnyu*), *tenyünyu dyu* /tən.njü dju/ ‘women; a group of women’ (sgl. *tenyünyu*), *kedahnyu* /kə.dàʔ.nju/ ‘many kings’ (sgl. *kedahgü*), *pethinyu* /pə.thi.nju/ ‘the elders’ (sgl. *pethigü*), *Mekeronnyu* /me.kə.rò.nju/ ‘the Karbis’. Common derivatives are formed by adding suffixes such as *-nyu* ‘relating to; belonging to’, *-gi* ‘the feminine ending’, *-gü* ‘the masculine ending’, and so forth. Examples are *terunyu thyü* /tə.rü.nju thjə/ ‘gaur’ (lit., ‘the cow of the jungle’), *shejangi* /ʃé.dʒəŋ.gi/ ‘younger sister’, *tsagi* /tsá.gi/ ‘elder sister’, *kedahgi* /kə.dàʔ.gi/ ‘queen’, *tsagü* /tsá.gə/ ‘elder brother’, and *kedahgü* /kə.dàʔ.gə/ ‘king’.

We find the non-pronominal *a-* and *n-* among the prefixes lemmatising nouns. The former occurs in kinship terms and the names of internal organs, private parts, and certain animal body parts: *ahang* /à.hã/ ‘mammary gland’, *akishah* /à.ki.ʃã/ ‘heart’, *aphwen* /à.phwɛ̃/ ‘lungs’, *arü* /à.rə/ ‘bone’, *ashe* /à.ʃé/ ‘gall bladder’, *ashüh* /à.ʃə/ ‘testicles’, *athen* /à.thən/ ‘anus’, *ama* /à.mál/ ‘tail’, *asü* /à.só/ ‘wing (of a bird)’, and *atseh* /à.tsé/ ‘horn’. A syllabic nasal prefix occurs in names of many external organs: *nben* /n̩.bé/ ‘hand’, *nchingshah* /n̩.tʃiŋ.ʃã/ ‘calf (of the leg)’, *nhü* /n̩.hü/ ‘face’, *npha* /n̩.phál/ ‘leg’, *nmenchen* /n̩.mən.tʃən/ ‘body’, and *nsenpvu* /n̩.səm.pfu/ ‘forehead’. The same prefix appears in particular bird and animal names and names for some insects and worms, material artefacts and non-living objects, natural phenomena, and a few abstract nouns. Examples are *ngo* /n̩.go/ ‘laughing thrush’, *nshü* /n̩.ʃə/ ‘dove’, *nchong* /n̩.tʃõ ~ n̩.tʃon/ ‘Himalayan crestless porcupine’, *nphu* /n̩.phu/

‘alligator’, *npyu* /ŋ.pju/ ‘butterfly’, *ntsi* /ŋ.tsi/ ‘hookworm’, *nri* /ŋ.rì/ ‘axe’, *nrü* /ŋ.rá/ ‘winnowing fan’, *nyhü* /ŋ.jə/ ‘cloud’, and *nshebo* /ŋ.jə.bó/ ‘stench’.

A nominalising *ke-* occurs in *kerehyo* /kə.rə.j(j)ò/ ‘swimming’, *keshe* /kə.ʃe/ ‘death’, *keshe* /kə.ʃo/ ‘love’, *kethü* /kə.thə/ ‘work; action’, and *kewhen* /kə.mě/ ‘playing’. *Kerehyü* /kə.rə.j(j)ə/ ‘thief; stealer’ is *nomen agentis* (cf. *reyhyü* ‘steal’). Prefixed verbs and adjectives also add the same prefix to form corresponding nouns. For example, *nyye(t)* /ŋ.njət/ ~ /ŋ.njəʔ/ ‘sweet’ is an adjective in the verbless constructions *Jürashah e nnyet* ‘(The) pineapple (is) sweet’ and *thachiben thachishah e nnyet* ‘(The) mango of this tree (is) sweet’. Adding *ke-* to it makes it a noun: *Kennyet tü nyi ho bing nyu* – ‘(I) have a craving for sweets’ (prodrop construction) and *Ale nru keseka kennyet tü nyi güri hü ma* ‘When I was sick, I had a strong craving for sweets’. The word *nyyu* /ŋ.njú/ is the equivalent of the English verb ‘born’: *Serishen le Shahonyu phenka nnyu lo* ‘Serishen was born in Shahonyu village’ (perfective aspect). To substantivise it, *ke-* is added to the root: *Serishen kennyu le Shahonyu phen ka* ‘Serishen’s birth was in Shahonyu village’ (verbless construction, unmarked past tense).

The prefixes *a-* and *ke-* also appear in some adjectives: *akeme* /à.kə.mé/ ‘similar’, *aren* /à.ré/ ‘old’, *adigwa* /à.dì.gwa/ ‘happy’, *kedi* /kə.dì/ ‘short’, *kehang* /kə.hā/ ‘red’, *kekhiü* /kə.khá/ ‘bitter’, and *keyhen* /kə.jən/ ‘tasty’.

Two fossilised prefixes, *me-* and *te-*, are found in nouns referring to certain animals and humans with physical challenges: *meserang* /mè.sə.rā/ ~ /mè.sə.rāŋ/ ‘rabbit’, *meserong* /mè.sə.ró/ ~ /mè.sə.róŋ/ ‘fox’, *merü* /mè.rá/ ‘dwarf’ and *mejonnyu* /mè.dʒə.nju/ ‘eunuch’. Many animal, bird and insect names attest to using the other prefix: *tebo* /tə.bó/ ‘pig’, *tehih* /tə.hì/ ‘dog’, *temen* /tə.mě/ ‘tiger’, *tepang* /tə.pā/ ‘hoolock gibbon’, *tepvu* /tə.pfú/ ‘rat’, *tegu* /tə.gə/ ‘bird’, *tegu* /tə.gú/ ‘crow’, *terü* /tə.rá/ ‘chicken’, *terheh* /tə.ré/ ‘head louse’, *tekhu* /tə.khü/ ‘mosquito’, *teshiü* /tə.ʃí/ ‘termite’. *te-* is also used in the nouns *teme* /tə.mè/ ‘man; human’ and *tenyünyu* /tə.njə.njú/ ‘woman’. Sometimes, this prefix alternates with *a-* and *ke-*, e.g. *adishü* /à.dì.ʃə/ ~ *tedishü* /tə.dì.ʃə/ ‘penis’, *amo* /à.mò/ ~ *temo* /tə.mò/ ‘vagina’, and *kejongdi* /kə.dʒən.dì/ ~ *tejongdi* /tə.dʒən.dì/ ‘urine’.

## 8. Phonological processes

### 8.1 Nasalisation

A word-final /n/ is retained after /ə/; otherwise, it disappears from the syllable after nasalising the preceding vowel. Rengma writing does not mark the nasalised vowel with a tilde. The velar nasal /ŋ/ (written as *ng*) is unstable, possibly still in transition, when a vowel other than /ə/ precedes it. Female speakers favour nasalised vowels over nasal rhymes more than males do. The author found some words exhibiting a free variation between nasalised vowels and nasal rhymes among male speakers.

<i>achen</i>	(Male)	/à.tʃən/	(Female)	/à.tʃən/	‘bone marrow’
<i>büthong</i>		/bə.thõ/ ~ /bə.thõŋ/		/bə.thõ/	‘shoulder’
<i>dwen</i>		/dwě/		/dwě/	‘wrap in a banana leaf’
<i>gwaterang</i>		/gwá.tə.rā/		/gwá.tə.rā/	<i>Bambusa balcooa</i>
<i>kakhing</i>		/ka.khĩ/ ~ /ka.khě/		/ka.khĩ/ ~ /ka.khě/	‘door’
<i>khwen</i>		/khwě/		/khwě/	‘leaf’
<i>mahphong</i>		/máʔ.phõ/ ~ /máʔ.phõŋ/		/máʔ.phõ/	‘oven’
<i>nri kang</i>		/ŋ.rì kã/		/ŋ.rì kã/	‘handle of an axe’
<i>rechin</i>		/rə.tʃĩ/ ~ /rə.tʃĩŋ/		/rə.tʃĩ/	‘think’
<i>sekong</i>		/sə.kõ/ ~ /sə.kõŋ/		/sə.kõ/	‘take care of somebody’
<i>yhong</i>		/jõ/ ~ /jõŋ/		/jõ/	‘grow’

It is essential also to consider exceptions to the generalisation made above: *aming* /à.mìn/ ~ /à.mèŋ/ ‘cost; price’, *chिंग* /tʃĩŋ/ ‘gum’, *hing* /hĩŋ/ ~ /heŋ/ ‘breathe’, *makhong* /ma.khóŋ/ ‘derrière’, and *shong* /ʃoŋ/ ‘slacked lime’.

The same pattern of vowel nasalisation was observed in non-final syllables, with the notable difference being the appearance of the bilabial nasal by regressive assimilation in alternations male speakers sometimes made.

<i>hendah</i>	(Male)	/hě.dàʔ/ ~ /hen.dàʔ/	(Female)	/hě.dàʔ/	‘a large forest’
<i>jambe</i>		/dʒã.bé/ ~ /dʒam.bé/		/dʒã.bé/	‘land leech’
<i>khwenbo</i>		/khwě.bo/ ~ /khwém.bo/		/khwě.bo/	‘red banana’
<i>nhennyu</i>		/ŋ.hě.nju/		/ŋ.hě.nju/	‘daytime’
<i>Nzangnyu</i>		/ŋ.zã.nju/		/ŋ.zã.nju/	‘Rengmas’
<i>poringnyu</i>		/pò.rĩ.nju/		/pò.rĩ.nju/	‘bachelor’

In the following cases, female speakers did not replace nasal codas occurring after vowels other than /ə/ with nasalised vowels inside words: *bendro* /bèn.drò/ ‘spider’, *bingkhen* /bín.khèn/ ‘a small rectangular stool’, *gwendah* /gwèn.dàʔ/ ‘the Himalayan black bear’, *hontsen* /hon.tsɛ̃/ ‘great hornbill’, *phajongpvü* /phá.dʒòm.pfə/ ~ *phazongpvü* /phá.zòm.pfə/ ‘toe’, and *güurang kepengi* /gə.rǎ kə.pə̃ŋ.qi/ ‘Indian grey hornbill’.

Data from Nzon Tseminyu khwen indicate that nasals occurring after vowels other than /ə/ behave similarly. Only the velar nasal after the vowel /u/ narrowly survives in a few cases: *sensun* /sen.suŋ/ [sen-tsun] ‘domestic buffalo’ and *tsun* /tsuŋ/ [tsun] ‘flow’. However, nasalisation occurs in the ultima and less frequently in the penult: *min* /mĩ/ ‘body’, *pen* /pɛ̃/ ‘carry on the shoulder’, *tekhu phaphon* /tə.khù phá.pò/ ‘mosquito’, *yhinkon* /jĩŋ.kò/ ‘nose’, *tsonchü* /tsò.tʃə̃/ ‘walk on the road’, *menzoh* /mɛ̃.zóʔ/ ‘leopard’, and *gyürhon* /gǰə.rò/ ‘oriental pied hornbill’. This process is the same in both dialects. In some Nzon Tseminyu words, the sixth vowel is also nasalised: *pviin* /pfə̃/ ‘five’ and the compound *hempviin* /hem.pfə̃/ ‘fifty’. Interestingly, the nasalised central vowel /ə̃/ does not appear once in the list of almost a thousand Nzang Terüpvunyu words compiled here.

## 8.2 Nasal place assimilation

The syllabic nasal<sup>10</sup> in Nzang khwen, whether a pronominal or non-pronominal prefix, readily assimilates the place feature of the following consonant.

<i>n-</i> , <i>ng-</i> →	/ŋ/	<i>ncho</i>	/ŋ.tʃo/	‘now’
		<i>kende</i>	/kən.dɛ̃/	‘poor’
		<i>ngzu</i>	/ŋ.zù/	‘your (sgl.gen) mother’
		<i>nrü</i>	/ŋ.rə̃/	‘winnowing fan’
		<i>nthu</i>	/ŋ.thú/	‘fear; be afraid’
	/ŋ/	<i>ngo</i>	/ŋ.go/	‘laughing thrush’
		<i>nghu</i>	/ŋ.hú/	‘your (sgl.gen) face’
		<i>nki</i>	/ŋ.ki/	‘twenty’
		<i>nkhero</i>	/ŋ.khá.ro/	‘loose’
		<i>nshü</i>	/ŋ.ʃə̃/	‘dove’
	/ɲ/	<i>nbang</i>	/ɲ.bá/	‘your (sgl.gen) grandfather’
		<i>npyu</i>	/ɲ.pju/	‘butterfly’
		<i>npha berü</i>	/ɲ.phá bə̃.rə̃/	‘talus; anklebone’
		<i>nphu</i>	/ɲ.phu/	‘alligator’
		<i>ngmen</i>	/ɲ.mən/	‘your (sgl.gen) mouth’

Also, consider the following lexemes where *chen* ‘sky’ is one of the combining stems.

<i>chen</i> /tʃən/ ‘sky’ →	/tʃən/	<i>chen nrü</i>	/tʃən ɲ.rə̃/	‘rain’
	/tʃəm/	<i>chenbü</i>	/tʃəm.bə̃/	‘air’
	/tʃəŋ/	<i>chenkenbü</i>	/tʃəŋ.kəm.bə̃/	‘storm’
		<i>chenkenpye</i>	/tʃəŋ.kəm.pjé/	‘lightning’

Likewise, the place feature of a nasal after the vowel /ə/ in any word becomes similar to the place feature of the following consonant. Male and female speakers showed no difference.

<i>athenben</i>	(Male)	/à.thəm.bən/	(Female)	/à.thəm.bən/	‘rectum’
<i>chenkenbü</i>		/tʃəŋ.kəm.bə̃/		/tʃəŋ.kəm.bə̃/	‘storm’
<i>gwenkho, gwüinkho</i>		/gwəŋ.kho/		/gwəŋ.kho/	‘time’
<i>kendenyu</i>		/kən.dɛ̃.ɲju/		/kən.dɛ̃.ɲju/	‘the poor’
<i>nsenpvu</i>		/ɲ.səm.pfu/		/ɲ.səm.pfu/	‘forehead’
<i>senphang</i>		/səm.phā/		/səm.phā/	‘bat; flying fox’
<i>shenrü</i>		/ʃən.rə̃/		/ʃən.rə̃/	‘bring’

<sup>10</sup> The Nzang/Nzon (Rengma) /ŋ/, when it does not change to /ŋ/ or /ɲ/, is pronounced approximately as the vocalic or syllabic nasal at the end of English ‘garden’ /gɑːdn/ and ‘nation’ /neɪʃn/. In the *Linguistic Survey of India*, the syllabic *n* is transliterated as *un*, as in *Unzā* (Grierson 1903: 235) = *Nzang*. Marrison (1967, I: 42, 115, 254, 265), on the other hand, describes the Rengma syllabic nasals as ‘prenasals’ and the word-initial sequences *nk-*, *nr-*, *nt-*, etcetera as ‘prenasalised consonants’. The Rengma syllabic nasal typically has a VC-type structure from which the obligatory segment has corroded.



Sometimes, the assimilated nasal is written inside the word to match the pronunciation: *dükenpha* ~ *dükempha* /dó.kəm.phà/ 'weft', *hempung* /həm.pũ/ 'fifty', *jampvu* /džā.pfú/ ~ /džam.pfú/ 'weed', *hempung* /həm.pũ/ 'fifty', *khenphu* ~ *khemphu* /khəm.phu/ 'door frame', *nmempvu* /n̩.məm.pfu/ 'bluebottle; blowfly', *phembu* /phém.bú/ 'breast cover' (< *phēh nbu*), *sembe* /səm.bé/ 'millipede', and *zambēh* /zəm.báʔ/ 'ashes'.

Examples from the Tseminyu dialect would show how predictable this pattern is. As in the Terüpvunyu dialect, when the following syllable has a dental or alveolar segment at the beginning, /n/ is retained; however, it is replaced by /ŋ/ or /m/, depending on whether the consonant across the syllable boundary but within the word boundary is a velar or labial segment: Tsem. *kentyü* /kən.tjə/ 'ant', *kenzi* /kən.zi/ 'blue', *tsevenkenri* ~ *tsengkenri* /tʃəŋ.kən.rí/ 'rain', *kenhon* /kəŋ.hǒ/ 'red', *nsha* /ŋ.ʃáʔ/ 'bear fruit', *sunmere* /sùm.mè.ré/ 'garlic', *sunmeron* /sùm.mè.rǒ/ 'onion', *tseryü nme* /tsə.rjə n̩.mé/ 'eleven', and *zonbü* /zòm.báʔ/ 'ashes'.

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## Nzang Terüpvunyu Word list

[Abbreviations: *adj.* adjective, *adv.* adverb, *conj.* conjunction, *det.* determiner, *du.* dual (number), *fem.* feminine, *gen.* genitive, *interrog.* interrogative, *masc.* masculine, *mod.* modal, *n.* noun, *px.* prefix, *pl.* plural, *post.* postpositive or postposition, *pron.* pronoun, *sfx.* suffix, *sgl.* singular, *v.* verb]

**a** /a/ *pron.* first person pronominal base: *sgl.* *a*, *du.* *ahi* /a.hi/, and *pl.* *agong* /a.gõ/. The genitive case is unmarked: *a latsi khwen* ‘my book’, *ahi bipang* /a.hi bi.pã/ ‘our (du.) money’, *agong phen* /a.gõ phèn/ ‘our (pl.) village’. Tseminyu equivalents are – *sgl.* *a*, *du.* *ai* and *nyi*, and *pl.* *agun* /a.gũ/.

**a-** /à-/ *px.* a non-pronominal prefix used with nouns (see section 7)

**abing** /à.bĩ/ ~ /à.bin/ *n.* catarrh of the throat

**abün** /à.bèn/ *n.* chaff; husk

**achen** /à.tʃən/ *n.* bone marrow

**ada** /à.dá/ *n.* father’s elder brother

**aden**<sup>1</sup> /à.dən/ *n.* group, pack, swarm, etc. Forms the plural of animals: *nyi den* ‘a sounder of wild pigs’, *pyong den* ‘elephants, a parade of elephants’. Rarely used in place of **-nyu**, which forms the plural of nouns referring to people; however, the third person plural is *liden*. It contrasts with **-dyu**, which forms the plural of nouns referring to people (see section 7). Collective nouns are formed by adding **-nyu**<sup>2</sup>.

**aden**<sup>2</sup> /à.dən/ *n.* thigh

**adigwa** /à.di.gwa/ *adj.* happy. This word is less used than its synonym, **shürhen**.

**adishü** /à.di.ʃə/ or **tedishü** /tè.di.ʃə/ *n.* penis

**agür pithong** /à.gèr pi.thò/ *n.* hoopoe, *Upupa epos*.

**agwen**, **agwün** /à.gwèn/ *n.* lardon

**ahi** /à.hi/ *post.* sociative case marker: (A le) *apü ahi hü bing nyo* ‘I stay with my father.’

**ahu** /à.hu/ *n.* twig; a thin branch from which leaves grow

**ahudi** /à.hü.di/ *n.* front

**ahü** /à.hə/ *n.* tooth

**ainyu** /ài.nju/ *n.* cat

**ainyu phajüh** /ài.nju phá.dʒəʔ/ *n.* cat’s paw

**ajoka** /à.dʒó.kà/ *post.* (locativised) between; in the space or time separating two things or events

**ajonyu** /à.dʒó.nju/ *n.* middle

**ajoshah** /à.dʒo.ʃáʔ/ *n.* word. In word strings, it is more common to use only the root **jo** /dʒo/ instead of *ajoshah* or *joshah*, e.g. *jo kegwa* ‘a good word’, *Aben kejen ka jo le bing hü* ‘In the beginning was the word’ (John 1.1. Tsem (John ibid): *Sokerika nyu jo le hü in Kenshün Lesü*).

**akanle** /à.kã.le/ *conj.* because; for the reason that

**akeme** /à.kè.mé/ *adj.* similar; identical

**akemyen** /à.kè.mjən/ *adj.* ripe

**akengyhü** /à.kəŋ.jə/ *adj.* naked

**akenjen** /à.kən.dʒən/ *adj.* foolish

**akenju** /à.kən.dʒu/ *adj.* (of vegetables) raw

**akenrweng** /à.kən.rwě/ *adj.* broken (pot, glass, etc.)

**akenyhang** /à.kəŋ.já/ *adj.* lame

**akenyhü** /à.kəŋ.jə/ *adj.* (of fish, meat, etc.) raw: *tsehü kenyhü* ‘raw fish’, *thüh kenyhü* ‘raw meat’.

**akepvu** /à.kə.pfú/ *n.* bud

**akeshu** /à.kə.ʃú/ *n.* edible fat

**akethen** /à.kə.thě/ *adj.* old; having lived for a long time

**aketji** /à.kəʔ.dʒí/ *n.* half

**akhoka** /à.khò.kà/ *post.* (locativised) near; next to; close by

**akishah** /à.ki.ʃáʔ/ *n.* heart (organ)

**aleki** /à.lé.ki/ *post.* (locativised) outside; on the exterior side: *ka leki* ‘outside the house’.

**alünyugi** /à.lè.njù.gi/ *n.* bride

**ama** /à.má/ *n.* tail

**ameh** /à.méʔ/ *n.* root

**amen** /à.món/ *n.* dream

**aming** /à.mìŋ/ ~ /à.mèŋ/ *n.* cost; price: *aming kechen* ‘costly; expensive’. See **kechen**.

**amyu** /à.mjù/ *n.* mother’s brother

**anga** /à.ŋá/ *n.* baby

**anyi** /à.njí/ *n.* mother-in-law; father’s sister

**anyishah** /à.njì.ʃáʔ/ *n.* breast, usually that of a young woman; a non-lactating breast

**anyo** /à.njò/ *n.* father’s younger brother

**anyuki** /à.njú.ki/ *post.* (locativised) inside; on the interior side: *ka nyuki* ‘inside the house’.

**apha** /à.phà/ *n.* branch (of tree); bough

**aphü** /à.phó/ *pron.* all (of animate beings)

**aphwen** /à.phwě/ *n.* lungs

**aren** /à.rě/ *adj.* (of things) old; something from a bygone era or something that is of an earlier date

**ari**, **are** /à.rè/ *n.* the intestine or bowel in general, and the small intestine in particular

**aridah**, **aredah** /à.rè.dàʔ/ *n.* the large intestine

**arisen** /à.rì.són/ *n.* weaver bird

**ariü** /à.rè/ *n.* bone

**Asenyu** /à.sě.nju/ *n.* people who live in the plains

**ashe** /à.ʃé/ *n.* gall bladder

**asheka** /à.ʃè.kà/ ~ **asheki** /à.ʃè.ki/ *n.* (locativised) at the back of something or someone; behind/after someone or something.

**ashen** /à.ʃən/ *n.* liver

**ashong** /à.ʃò/ ~ /à.ʃòŋ/ *n.* summit; hilltop  
**ashong ketezan** /à.ʃòŋ kà.té.zá/ *n.* plateau; table-land. See also **ketezan**.  
**ashu** /à.ʃù/ *n.* wound; injury  
**ashüh** /à.ʃǔ/ *n.* seed; testicles  
**asü** /à.sá/ *n.* wing (of a bird)  
**ateyen** /à.tà.ján/ *pron.* (of inanimate objects) all  
**athen** /à.thèn/ *n.* anus  
**athenben** /à.thəm.bèn/ *n.* rectum  
**atseh** /à.tsé/ *n.* horn  
**atsü** /à.tsə/ *n.* place  
**aye** /à.jè/ *conj.* but: *Thühme le thühmenyu nnyuteh aye kapü we kapünyu nnyuteh* ‘Flesh begets flesh but Spirit begets spirit’ (John 3:6).  
**azu** /à.zù/ *n.* mother. The same term is also used for the elder and younger sisters of the mother. One could add the suffix **-gi** (see section 7) to refer to the mother’s elder sister.

**bang**<sup>1</sup> /bá/ *n.* grandfather: *abang* /à.bá/ (citation form), *abang* /á.bá/ ‘my grandfather’.  
**bang**<sup>2</sup> /bǎ/ *v.* cook  
**beh** /bǎ/ ~ **bet(h)** /bət/ *v.* boil  
**ben**<sup>1</sup> /bē/ *n.* hand: *nben* /n̩.bē/ (citation form).  
**ben**<sup>2</sup> /bən/ *n.* tree; plant. Also spelt **bün**. *Aben* ~ *abiün* /à.bən/ (citation form).  
**ben**<sup>3</sup> /bè/ *v.* light; illuminate  
**bendro** /bèn.drò/ *n.* spider  
**bendro ka** /bèn.drò kà/ *n.* spider’s web  
**benjen** /bèn.dʒən/ *n.* beginning: *Benjen ka Songgigü le chenden do kazi nthü shi* ‘In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth’ (Genesis 1.1). One could also use *aben kejen* instead of the compound *benjen* and rewrite the same verse as – *Aben kejen ka Songgigü le chenden do kazi nthü shi*. See also **ajoshah** for another example.  
**benjüh** /bē.dʒǔ/ *n.* palm; the flat of the hand  
**bi** /bi/ *n.* taro; arum  
**bing**<sup>1</sup> /bìŋ/ ~ /bèŋ/ *n.* drum  
**bing**<sup>2</sup> /bĩ/ ~ /biŋ/ *v.* copula  
**bing**<sup>3</sup> /bí/ ~ /bíŋ/ *v.* sit  
**bingkhen** /bíŋ.khèn/ *n.* a small rectangular stool, usually carved from a single block of wood  
**boboshah** /bo.bo.ʃǎ/ *n.* tomato  
**boshyu** /bó.ʃjú/ *v.* kill  
**botso** /bo.tso/ *n.* mongoose  
**buyong** /bù.jǒ/ ~ /bù.joŋ/ *n.* dung  
**büthong** /bà.thò/ ~ /bà.thòŋ/ *n.* shoulder  
**bvu** /bvú/ *v.* beat; strike: *bing bvü* ‘beat drum’, *dí bvü* ‘beat the water with the arms to propel oneself while swimming’.

**byen** /bjé/ *v.* tie a rope, belt, or strap around something

**che**<sup>1</sup> /tʃe/ *n.* hundred: *cheme* ‘one hundred’.  
**che**<sup>2</sup> /tʃé/ *v.* stamp: *nche* /n̩.tʃé/ (citation form).  
**che**<sup>3</sup> /tʃè/ *v.* wash: *ben che* ‘wash hands’.  
**cheh** /tʃé/ *n.* salt  
**cheh kennyet** /tʃé? kən.njət/ ~ /tʃé? kən.njǔ/ *n.* sugar. It roughly translates to ‘salt with a sweet taste’. The common word for ‘sugar’ is **shengnyi** /ʃē.nji/ < Assamese চেনি *ceni* /se.ni/.  
**chehushah** /tʃǎ.hù.ʃǎ/ *n.* lime; lemon  
**chen**<sup>1</sup> /tʃən/ *n.* sky; heaven  
**chen**<sup>2</sup> /tʃē/ *n.* spoon  
**chen**<sup>3</sup> /tʃən/ *v.* push  
**chen nrü** /tʃən n̩.rə/ ~ **chenkenrü** /tʃəŋ.kən.rə/ *n.* rain: *Chen nrü guri o phen yen ko* ‘Heavy rains flooded the village’. One could use *chenkenrü*, as in *Songgigü le chengkenrü lo kazi nyu shi* ‘God gives rain on earth’, although *chenkenrü* (= Tsem *tsenkenri*) is less common than *chen nrü* in the Terüpvunyu dialect. To form the equivalent of the English verb ‘rain’, the compound form *chen nrü* is generally avoided: *chen e chen bing o nrü* ‘It is raining from the sky’ (= ‘The rain is falling from the sky’).  
**chenbü** /tʃəm.bə/ *n.* air  
**chenhi** /tʃəŋ.hi/ *n.* nail; claw; hoof: *ben chenhi* ‘fingernail’, *pha chenhi* ‘toenail’, *keruh chenhi* ‘horse hooves’.  
**chenkenbü** /tʃəŋ.kəm.bə/ *n.* storm  
**chenkenhi** /tʃəŋ.kəŋ.hi/ *n.* a cool breeze blowing over the top of a hill  
**chenkenpye** /tʃəŋ.kəm.pjé/ *n.* lightning  
**chenkenye** /tʃəŋ.kə.njè/ *n.* earthquake  
**chenkesheng** /tʃəŋ.kə.ʃəŋ/ *n.* thunder  
**chenrü** /tʃən.rə/ *v.* come down; descend  
**chensheh** /tʃəŋ.ʃé/ *n.* winter; cold season  
**chenyen** /tʃəŋ.jən/ *n.* summer; warm season  
**chepwen** /tʃe.pwé/ ~ /tʃi.pwé/ *n.* tribe  
**cheyhü** /tʃə.jə/ *n.* tortoise  
**cheyhü küh** /tʃə.jə kǎ/ *n.* tortoiseshell  
**cheyü** /tʃə.jə/ *n.* perilla  
**chi**<sup>1</sup> /tʃi/ *post.* Used to make the future tense: *agong zu le khetjü tu bang chi sho* ‘Our mother will prepare dinner for us’, *Agong le kenshwen ka ng appointment latsi shi nen shi/chi sho* ‘We will send you the letter of appointment soon’.  
**chi**<sup>2</sup> /tʃĩ/ *v.* weep; shed tears  
**chi**<sup>3</sup> /tʃi/ *v.* drink  
**chih** /tʃi/ *v.* sting

**chindeh ben** /tʃĩn.dəʔ bən/ *n.* fig tree. The fruit is called **chindeh shah** /tʃĩn.dəʔ ʃáʔ/.

**ching** /tʃĩŋ/ *n.* gum

**chingten** /tʃĩn.tẽ/ *n.* birdlime

**cho**<sup>1</sup> /tʃo/ *n.* stone; rock

**cho**<sup>2</sup> /tʃð/ *v.* peel; remove the skin from fruits or vegetables

**chodah** /tʃo.dàʔ/ *n.* boulder

**choküh** /tʃo.káʔ/ *n.* cave

**chong** /tʃoŋ/ *v.* flow

**chongjenrü** /tʃón.dʒón.rə/ *n.* spinal cord

**chongshah** /tʃõŋ.ʃáʔ/ *n.* bottle gourd

**chü**<sup>1</sup> /tʃə/ *n.* nest: *tegü chü* ‘bird’s nest’

**chü**<sup>2</sup> /tʃə/ *v.* aid; help

**chü**<sup>3</sup> /tʃə/ *v.* fall

**chwen** /tʃwẽ/ *v.* bend

**chwentse** /tʃwẽ.tsé/ *v.* break (stick, rod, etc.) by bending it

**chyen** /tʃjẽ/ *n.* year

**chyu** /tʃjù/ *n.* white oil seed

**da** /dà/ *adv.* also

**de** /de/ *interrog pron.* what: *Ngzen le de?* ‘What is your name?’ This pronoun forms the base of interrogative adverbs and determiners: **dehang**, **degü**, **deka**, **deshü**, and **detsü**. The equivalent of English ‘why’ would be **de gen nyu** ‘for what’ or **de kang gen** ‘for what cause, reason, or purpose’.

**degü** /de.gə/ *interrog det.* which; what particular thing or object

**dehang** /de.hã/ *interrog adv.* how: *Dehang thyü bing?* ‘How are you doing?’ *Diphuka bing o Kenangbin (Lumding) ti kenen le dehang gwen kho lo mo?* ‘How long does it take to get from Diphu to Lumding?’

**deka** /de.kà/ ~ /də.kà/ *interrog adv.* where; to which place: *Ncho ng le deka gü mo?* ‘Where are you (sgl.) going now?’

**deng** /dèŋ/ *v.* chop; mince

**deshü** /de.ʃə/ *interrog adv.* how much; how many: *Ng thakhiünnyu tehipang deshü le ji(e) bing?* ‘How much money do you keep in your wallet?’

**dethü ka** /de.thə.kà/ *interrog adv.* when; at what time: *Dethü ka ng phakü hi lo hü?* ‘When did you buy your shoes? (unmarked for tense or aspect)’

**detsü** /de.tsə/ *interrog adv.* where; at or in which place or situation: *Ng we detsü ka hü bing?* ‘Where do you live?’

**di** /di/ *n.* water

**di kechü** /di kə.tʃə/ *n.* waterfall

**di kedah** /di kə.dàʔ/ *n.* flood

**di kenhü** /di kən.hə/ *n.* spring; a place where water flows out of the ground

**di kepen** /di kə.pən/ *n.* hot spring. Some also call it **kepen di** /kə.pən di/.

**di lyü** /di ljə/ *v.* bathe

**digü** /di.gə/ *n.* egret; crane

**dinyu nyeh** /di.nju njəʔ/ *n.* water leech

**diri** /di.ri/ *n.* river

**diseki** /di.sè.ki/ *n.* riverbank

**disen** /di.sən/ *n.* fireplace

**do**<sup>1</sup> /do/ *conj.* and

**do**<sup>2</sup> /dó/ *v.* weave yarn, thread, or cloth

**dong** /dõ/ ~ /dõŋ/ *v.* stand

**dongi** /dõ.gi/ ~ /doŋ.gi/ *n.* a bamboo basket for harvested rice [cf. Assamese ৰুগি *dugi*]

**donyu** /dò.nju/ *n.* slave

**dü** /də/ *n.* hoe

**dübing** /də.bí/ ~ /də.bíŋ/ *n.* the backstrap loom in which one end of the warp is attached to a bar of a wooden structure and the other to a second bar attached by a belt to the weaver’s waist

**düchen** /də.tʃẽ/ *n.* weaving sword

**dükenpha, dükempha** /də.kəm.phà/ *n.* weft

**dükerhe** /də.kə.ʔe/ *n.* warp

**düpha** /də.phà/ *n.* a piece of leather attached to a strap that runs around a weaver’s back

**dwen** /dwẽ/ *v.* wrap in a banana leaf

**dyü** /djə/ *v.* cut something with several strokes of a sharp bladed tool

**ga** /gà/ *v.* kill with a spear

**gen nyu** /gẽ nju/ *post.* because of; as a result of

**gi** /gi/ *n.* armlet

**gida** /gi.dá/ *n.* shield

**ging** /gín/ *n.* belly: *aging* /à.gín/ and *nging* /h̃.gín/ (citation forms), *aging* /á.gín/ ‘my belly’ and *nging* /h̃.gín/ ‘your belly’.

**ging gwa kemu** /gín gwa kə.mù/ *n.* diarrhoea. The compound translates to ‘an upset stomach’.

**ging nde** /gín ñ.dè/ *adj.* hungry. Literally translated, *ging nde* or rarely *ging kende* /gín kèn.dè/ would mean that the belly (*nging* or *aging*) does not have the means (*kende* ‘poor’) to relieve the hunger it feels. The non-pronominal *a-* prefix is also added: *Aging nde kebin tehik e thüh bokeshyunyu tsüka thüh shemeh reyhyü ko* ‘As the dog was hungry, he stole a piece of meat from the butcher’s’. See also p.12 for the form *ging nde* used without the prefixed *a-*.

**girhen** /gi.ʔən/ *n.* sword. The Rengmas traditionally used the bamboo sword.

**gonda** /gon.da/ *n.* neck  
**gonda kekhang** /gon.da kə.khĩ/ ~ /gon.da kə.khiŋ/ *n.* yoke  
**gong** /gõ/ ~ /goŋ/ *v.* variant of **gü**<sup>2</sup>.  
**gong ngeng** /gõ ñ.gě/ *n.* lesser golden-backed woodpecker  
**gonyu** /gò.nju/ *n.* servant (fem. **gogi** /gò.gi/)  
**gu** /gú/ *v.* reap (crop)  
**gü**<sup>1</sup> /qə/ *n.* ginger  
**gü**<sup>2</sup> /qə/ *v.* go  
**güdah** /qə.dàʔ/ *n.* peafowl  
**gükhyyu** /qə.khju/ *n.* quail  
**günyon** /qə.njõ/ *n.* cultivated bamboo  
**güpvu** /qə.pfu/ *n.* red junglefowl  
**gürang** /qə.rã/ *n.* oriental pied hornbill  
**gürang kepengi** /qə.rã kə.pəŋ.gi/ *n.* Indian grey hornbill  
**gürila** /qə.ri.là/ *n.* a cast iron or carbon steel round-bottomed pan with two small handles. It is called *kaḍhai* in many Indian languages.  
**güshü** /qə.ʃə/ *n.* bamboo, *Malocanna baccifera*  
**güsong** /qə.sõ/ *n.* hill mynah, *Gracula religiosa*  
**gütse** /qə.tsə/ *n.* parrot  
**güyang** /qə.jã/ *n.* bamboo, *Bambusa tulda*  
**gwa** /gwa/ *adj.* good. Prefixation is common: *pheh kegwa* ‘good clothing’.  
**gwachero** /gwà.tʃə.ro/ *n.* bulbul  
**gwamu** /gwa.mù/ *adj.* bad. One may also write **gwa kemu** /gwa kə.mù/. Shortened to **gwam** /gwàm/.  
**gwaterang** /gwá.tà.rã/ *n.* bamboo, *Bambusa balcooa*  
**gwayeng** /gwá.jě/ *n.* bamboo raft  
**gwen**<sup>1</sup> /gwě/ *n.* cut something with one stroke of a sharp bladed tool  
**gwen**<sup>2</sup>, **gwün** /gwèn/ *v.* shoot with a gun  
**gwen gwen** /gwě gwě/ ~ /gweŋ.gwě/ *adj.* slow  
**gwendah** /gwèn.dàʔ/ *n.* the Himalayan black bear  
**gwenjo** /gwèn.dʒò/ *n.* the sloth bear  
**gwenkho**, **gwüinkho** /gwəŋ.kho/ *n.* time  
**gyu** /qjù/ *n.* mithan  
  
**habin** /ha.bĩ/ *n.* market  
**hachang** /ha.tʃã/ *n.* sand. [Dimasa *hajeng*]  
**hadyü** /hà.djə/ *n.* the day after tomorrow  
**hang** /hã/ *n.* mammary gland; *ahang* (citation form) ‘lactating breast; mother’s breast’, *menthyü hang* ‘cow’s udder’.  
**he** /he/ ~ **hi** /hi/ *pron.* this: *he ka* ‘this house’, *he thachiben thachishah e nnyet* (verbless construction) ‘The mango of this tree (is) sweet’.  
**herhü** /hé.rə/ *n.* styte; a small swelling on the eyelid

**hedi** /hé.dí/ *v.* to have a liking to someone: *phi nhedi* /phi ñ.hé.dí/ ‘to take an instant liking for someone after seeing them’.  
**heh** /héʔ/ *v.* ask  
**hehü** /hé.hə/ *n.* eyebrow  
**heka** /hè.ka/ *n.* sun  
**heka kechü** /hè.ka kə.tʃə/ *n.* west  
**heka kepih** /hè.ka kə.píʔ/ *n.* east  
**hekepo** /hé.kə.pò/ *n.* blind man  
**hempung** /hèm.pũ/ *number* fifty  
**hen**, **heng** /hě/ *v.* yawn  
**hendah** /hě.dàʔ/ ~ /hen.dàʔ/ *n.* a large stretch of forest. See **tehen**.  
**henkegwa**, **hengkegwa** /hèn.kə.gwa/ *n.* blessing  
**hennyang**, **hengnyang** /hè.njã/ *n.* mustard  
**hentekü** /hèn.tə.kə/ *number* ninety  
**hentetse** /hèn.tə.tsə/ *number* eighty  
**hentsenyi** /hèn.tsə.njĩ/ *number* seventy  
**hentsero** /hèn.tsə.ró/ *number* sixty  
**henze** /hèn.zə/ *number* forty  
**herügi** /hé.rə.gi/ *n.* eyelash  
**hesennyu** /hè.sən.njú/ *n.* fruit fly  
**hetü** /hé.tə/ *n.* eye  
**hi**<sup>1</sup> /hi/ *n.* snot  
**hi**<sup>2</sup> /hí/ *n.* thatch; a tall-stemmed reed used for thatching roofs  
**hi**<sup>3</sup> /hi/ *v.* buy  
**hika** /hi.kà/ *adv.* here. See also *he*, *hi*, *pronoun*. Sometimes **nka** /ñ.kà/ is used instead of *hika*, as in *Liden le nchowé nka hü-bing nyo* ‘They live here now’.  
**hikang** /hi.kã/ *n.* nose  
**hing** /hiŋ/ ~ /heŋ/ *v.* breathe  
**hing regyu** /hĩ rə.gjù/ *n.* caterpillar  
**hingkenju** /hiŋ.kən.dʒu/ *n.* vegetables  
**hiyhe** /hi.jə/ *v.* blow one’s nose  
**hoko** /hó.kó/ *n.* noon  
**hong** /hõ/ *v.* 1. shape or make into a curve; 2. have a meeting with the participants forming a semi-circle as they squat on the floor  
**honthira** /hon.thi.ra/ *n.* orange. [Assamese সুমথিৰা *sumthira* /xum.thi.ra/ < Persian سنڭيره *sangtara*, which is probably related to the name of the Portuguese town *Sintra* or *Cintra*]. In an Nzang folk tale, we find the word **nyukenthügirashah** /njú.kən.thə.gi.ra.ʃãʔ/ for ‘orange’. Translated, it means ‘the fruit that makes babies’; see Debnath, ‘Why the Nzangnyu call the orange the fruit that makes babies’: <https://archive.org/details/rengma-assam-folk-tale>  
**hontsen** /hon.tsə/ *n.* great hornbill

**hoshi** /hò.ʃi/ v. free; release

**hu**<sup>1</sup> /hú/ n. face: *nhu* /ŋ.hú/ (citation form).

**hu**<sup>2</sup> /hù/ v. hit someone with a stick, etc. as one does, for example, to discipline a child

**hü**<sup>1</sup> /hə/ n. umbrella

**hü**<sup>2</sup> /há/ v. chase animals out of somewhere; chase unwanted intruders away

**hü**<sup>3</sup> /hə/ v. stay; remain; exist

**hüh** /həʔ/ n. fur; hair; feather: *pi hüh* ‘hair on the head’, *me hüh* ‘hair on a person’s body’, *temi hüh* ‘goat hair’, *tegü hüh* ‘bird feather’, *terü hüh* ‘chicken feather’, and *meserang hüh* ‘rabbit fur’.

**hükhibu** /hə.khi.bu/ n. hook

**hüpen** /hə.pən/ n. wreathed hornbill

**hüten** /hə.tě/ n. fish prepared by smoking it on the *mahsokhen*. See *mahsokhen*.

**hüzü** /hə.zə/ n. molar

**jambe** /dʒä.bé/ ~ /dʒam.bé/ n. land leech

**jamphe** /dʒä.phe/ ~ /dʒam.phe/ n. grass

**jampvu** /dʒä.pfú/ ~ /dʒam.pfú/ n. weed

**jangkhi** /dʒä.khi/ ~ /dʒàn.khi/ n. sickle

**jen**<sup>1</sup> /dʒě/ n. dao; a broad-bladed cutting tool with a wooden hilt

**jen**<sup>2</sup> /dʒě/ n. name

**jen**<sup>3</sup> /dʒən/ post. comitative case marker: (*A le*) *anyünyu jen o sobi phi hü ma* ‘I saw a movie with my wife’.

**jen**<sup>4</sup> /dʒán/ v. begin; start

**jen**<sup>5</sup> /dʒən/ v. hit or strike with the fist; stab with a knife or dagger

**jenkü** /dʒě.kà/ ~ /dʒèn.kà/ n. a sheath for the blade of a dao

**jenkürang** /dʒě.kà.rá/ ~ /dʒèn.kà.rá/ n. a dao belt

**ji**<sup>1</sup> /dʒí/ v. lie on the bed to rest or sleep

**ji**<sup>2</sup> /dʒì/ v. write

**jo** /dʒo/ v. speak; talk

**joh** /dʒòʔ/ n. net. One could refer to the fishing net as *tsehü kegwen joh* /tsə.hə kə.gwən dʒòʔ/ in a euphemistic way, but in common Rengma usage, the word *joh* is sufficient to convey its meaning.

**joh phyen** /dʒòʔ phjén/ v. cast net

**jojo** /dʒo.dʒo/ ~ **jo kejo** /dʒo kə.dʒo/ n. conversation

**jolo** /dʒo.lo/ n. news

**jong** /dʒò/ ~ **zong** /zò/ ~ /zòn/ n. rainbow

**jwen** /dʒwě/ v. sell

**ka**<sup>1</sup> /ka/ n. house: *nka* (citation form), *nka ka* /ŋ.ka kà/ ‘in the house’.

**ka**<sup>2</sup> /kà/ ~ **ki** /kì/ post. locative and ablative marker: *aben kejen ka* ‘in the beginning’, *a le ka ki gong*

*hü ma* ‘I went home’. The ablative case is also marked with the postposition *gen* /gě/: *chen gen bin nyo* ‘(is) from the sky’.

**ka kephu** /ka kə.phù/ n. window

**kachang** /ka.tʃǎ/ n. post or pillar (of a house)

**kagü** /ka.gə/ n. sparrow

**kajangnyu** /ka.dʒǎ.nju/ n. neighbour. From shortening of **kajang kanyu** /ka.dʒǎ ka.nju/.

**kakhing** /ka.khĩ/ ~ /ka.khẽ/ n. door

**kakhüshen** /ka.khə.ʃən/ n. broom

**kalu** /kà.lù/ v. marry. It is used to mean that a girl marries a boy: *kalu kekü* ‘suitable for marriage’.

See also *tennyülo*.

**kamenyu** /ka.me.nju/ n. family; household

**kangküsha(h)** /kaŋ.kə.ʃǎʔ/ n. cucumber

**kapü** /ka.pə/ n. spirit; a non-physical being believed to exist: *kenshin kapü* ‘the Holy Spirit’.

See also *shümü* and *rhemehe*.

**kapvü** /ka.pfə/ n. clan

**kaqwennyu (kakwennyu)** /ka.kwě.njú/ n. house gecko

**karo** /kà.rò/ adj. thin; having little flesh on bones

**katsyü** /ka.tsjə/ n. roof

**kazi** /ka.zí/ n. earth; soil; world: *a le kazi keben gü* ‘I am the light of the world’ (John 8.12). J.S Rengma’s (2020:210) translation of this verse is *ale kazi higi kebengü*. He portrays the earth as feminine by adding the word *higi* after *kazi*.

**kebang** /kə.bǎ/ n. cooking

**keben** /kə.bě/ n. light; lamp

**kebing** /kə.bí/ ~ /kə.bíŋ/ n. seat

**kechang**<sup>1</sup> /kə.tʃǎ/ adj. white: *phéh kechang* ‘a white cloth’.

**kechang**<sup>2</sup> (also spelt **ketchang**) /kə.tʃǎ/ adj. many

**keche** /kə.tʃě/ adj. black

**kechen** /kə.tʃě/ adj. difficult

**kechi** /kə.tʃí/ n. alcoholic drink

**kechih** /kə.tʃĩʔ/ n. sting: *khyü-kechih* ‘bee sting’.

**kechü** /kə.tʃǎ/ n. help

**kedah** /kə.dàʔ/ n. big; great

**kedahgi** /kə.dàʔ.gí/ n. queen

**kedahgü** /kə.dàʔ.gə/ n. king

**kedasheng** /kə.da.ʃəŋ/ n. a salutation the Nzang use to open and close speeches and conversations. It corresponds to English ‘Greetings to you’ at the beginning and ‘Thank you’ at the end.

**kedí** /kə.dí/ adj. short (in terms of distance)

**keeditong** /kə.dí.tō/ adj. short (in height)

**kedongpong** /kə.dõ.põ/ ~ /kə.dòm.põ/ n. mortar

**kedongpong buru** /kə.dõ.põ bu.ru/ ~ /kə.dòm.põ bu.ru/ n. pestle

*kegenjo* /kə.gen.dʒo/ *n.* criticism; fault-finding  
*kegubu* /kə.gu.bu/ *n.* saw; a tool for cutting wood  
*kehang* /kə.hã/ *adj.* red  
*kehang ketü* /kə.hã kə.tu/ *n.* rust  
*kehanyu* /kə.ha.nju/ *pron.* someone; somebody  
*kehong*<sup>1</sup> /kə.hõ/ *adj.* bent; curved  
*kehong*<sup>2</sup> /kə.hõ/ *n.* meeting. Etymologically, it is connected to *kehong*<sup>1</sup>. See also *hong*.  
*keja* /kə.dʒá/ *v.* scratch  
*kejen*<sup>1</sup> /kə.dʒən/ *n.* blow; punch  
*kejen*<sup>2</sup> /kə.dʒən/ ~ *kezen* /kə.zən/ *n.* night; darkness  
*keji*<sup>1</sup> /kə.dʒi/ *n.* sleep  
*keji*<sup>2</sup> /kə.dʒi/ *n.* writing  
*kejibing* /kə.dʒi.bí/ ~ /kə.dʒi.bín/ *n.* (coined) table  
*kejibu* /kə.dʒi.bu/ *n.* (coined) pen; an object for writing with ink  
*kejing* /kə.dʒi/ ~ /kə.dʒín/ *adj.* sad  
*kejoh* /kə.dʒó/ *n.* shame; dishonour  
*kejongdi* /kə.dʒon.di/ or *tejongdi* /tə.dʒon.di/ *n.* urine  
*kejü* /kə.dʒə/ *adj.* far  
*kekhi* /kə.khə/ *adj.* bitter  
*kekhyü* /kə.khjə/ *n.* smoke  
*kembo*<sup>1</sup> /kəm.bò/ *n.* kiss  
*kembo*<sup>2</sup>, *kemboh* /kəm.bó/ *adj.* huge  
*kembunyu* /kəm.bu.nju/ *n.* a person illegitimate by birth  
*keme* /kə.mé/ *number one*  
*kemeh* /kə.mé/ *v.* to close eyes  
*kememe* /kə.me.me/ *pron.* each  
*kemo* /kə.mò/ *adj.* blue  
*kemphvü* /kəm.pfhə/ *n.* dust  
*kemü* /kə.mə/ *n.* sin. The literal meaning of *kemu* is anything bad, unpleasant, or even unacceptable.  
*kenchi* /kən.tʃi/ *n.* delay  
*kenchong* /kən.tʃõ/ ~ /kən.tʃõn/ *adj.* deep  
*kende* /kən.dè/ *adj.* poor; destitute. Usually, *nde* /n̩.dè/ is used in compounds. See *ging nde*.  
*kendenyu* /kən.dè.nju/ *n.* the poor; poor man  
*kendunyu* /kən.du.nju/ *n.* wise man  
*kendü* /kən.də/ *n.* testing; examining  
*kene* /kə.nè/ *adj.* near  
*kenen* /kə.nẽ/ ~ *kennen* /kən.nẽ/ *adj.* cheap  
*kengge* /kəŋ.gè/ *adj.* strong; having physical strength  
*kengku* /kəŋ.kù/ *n.* shrimp  
*kengyü* /kəŋ.gjə/ *n.* shade; shadow  
*kenhi* /kəŋ.hi/ *n.* cool breeze  
*kenji* /kən.dʒi/ *adj.* straight. Often used as *nji* /n̩.dʒi/, without the *ke-* prefix: *tsang le nji* ‘the road (is) straight’ (a verbless construction).  
*kenjin* /kən.dʒi/ *n.* itch

*kenjvu* /kəŋ.jju/ *adj.* green  
*kenkhüshah* /kəŋ.khə.ʃá/ *n.* aubergine  
*kenkhyü*, *kengkhyü* /kəŋ.khjə/ *n.* cough  
*kenkyu*, *kengkyu* /kəŋ.kju/ *adj.* false; untrue  
*kennyān* /kən.njā/ *n.* exhaustion. See *nnyān*.  
*kennyet* /kən.njət/ ~ /kən.njə/ *n.* sweet  
*kennyu* /kən.njú/ *n.* birth  
*kenphwenyuhun* /kəm.phwè.jũ/ ~ /kəm.phwèn.jũ/ *n.* a certain type of tree bark used to poison fish  
*kenpo* /kəm.pó/ *n.* mud; clay  
*kenrhushah* /kəŋ.rü.ʃá/ *n.* potato  
*kenromah* /kən.rò.mà/ *n.* wildfire  
*kenron* /kən.rõ/ *adj.* empty  
*kenru* /kən.rú/ *n.* fever  
*kense* /kən.sé/ *n.* a joint between the two lengths of an object such as bamboo  
*kenshen*<sup>1</sup>, *kensheng*<sup>1</sup> /kəŋ.ʃən/ *adj.* dry  
*kenshen*<sup>2</sup>, *kensheng*<sup>2</sup> /kəŋ.ʃən/ *number three*  
*kenshi* /kəŋ.ʃi/ *adj.* clean  
*kenshwen*<sup>1</sup> /kəŋ.ʃwè/ *n.* a joint made by tying two things together with a rope or string. The verb is *nshwen* /n̩.ʃwè/.  
*kenshwen*<sup>2</sup> /kəŋ.ʃwè/ *adj.* early: *lonyi kenshwen ka* ‘in the early morning; at dawn’. *Nshwen* /n̩.ʃwè/ is common in constructions. The word *shwenshu* /ʃwè.ʃu/ ~ /ʃwèn.ʃu/ is more or less synonymous with *kenshwen*.  
*kensi* /kən.sì/ *n.* spittle  
*kensyu* /kən.sju/ *adj.* heavy  
*kenten* /kən.tən/ ~ *tenten* /tən.tən/ *adj.* tight  
*kenthing* /kən.thìn/ ~ /kən.thèn/ *n.* pimple  
*kenthü* /kən.thú/ *n.* fear  
*kentokhen* /kən.to.khən/ *n.* (coined) motor vehicle  
*kentsodi* /kən.tsò.di/ *n.* dew drops  
*kenyah* /kə.njə/ *adj.* rich  
*kenyahnyu* /kə.njə.nju/ *n.* the rich  
*kenyechü* /kə.njè.tʃə/ *n.* snail  
*kenyhu* /kəŋ.jù/ *number two*  
*kenyi* /ke.nji/ *n.* opium [Assamese কানি *kāni* /ka.ni/. *Kāni* means ‘a torn piece of cloth’. The opium poppy received this name because pieces of cloth were used during its harvesting.]  
*kenyosi* /kən.njò.sì/ *n.* unpleasant odour in the armpits  
*kereji* /kə.rè.dʒi/ *adj.* having no sense of response-ability and spending time wandering  
*kereku* /kə.rè.kù/ *adj.* lazy; unwilling to work  
*kereshu* /kə.rè.ʃu/ *n.* worship  
*kereyhyo* /kə.rè.j(j)ò/ *n.* swimming  
*kereyhyü(nyu)* /kə.rè.j(j)ə.(nju)/ *n.* thief; stealer  
*kerha* /kə.rá/ *n.* baldric



**kerubing** /kə.rù.bí/ ~ /kə.rù.bín/ *n.* (coined) chair  
**keruh** /kə.rú/ *n.* horse  
**keshang** /kə.ʃǎ/ *adj.* sour  
**keshashah** /kə.ʃǎ.ʃǎ/ *n.* apple  
**keshe** /kə.ʃe/ *n.* death  
**keshen** /kə.ʃě/ *adj.* small  
**keshi** /kə.ʃi/ *n.* ‘washing’: *tu khong keshi* ‘washing the plate on which rice has been eaten’.  
**keshing<sup>1</sup>** /kə.ʃĩ/ ~ /kə.ʃin/ *adj.* new  
**keshing<sup>2</sup>** /kə.ʃĩ/ ~ /kə.ʃin/ *n.* question; inquiry  
**kesho** /kə.ʃo/ *n.* love  
**kesi** /kə.sì/ *number* refers to ‘two’ when used as a multiplicand: *kesi keme e kenyhu* ‘two times one is two’, *kesi pung e tserü* ‘two times five is ten’.  
**ketecho** /kə.tè.tʃo/ 1. *adj.* tall; high: *rincho ketecho* ‘tall mountain’. 2. *n.* heights; an area of high ground.  
**ketezang** /kə.tè.zǎ/ *n.* plains; valley  
**kethang** /kə.thǎ/ *adj.* long: *tsang kethang* ‘a long road’, *ma kethang* ‘a long tail’. The root is *thang* /thǎ/ ~ /thaj/.  
**kethennyu** /kə.thě.nju/ *n.* an old man  
**kethoning** /kə.tho.nĩ/ ~ /kə.tho.nin/ *n.* recalling; remembering  
**kethü** /kə.thə/ *n.* work; action  
**ketsebu** /kə.tse.bu/ *n.* tongs; scissors  
**ketsen** /kə.tsən/ *n.* truth  
**ketseyhen** /kə.tsě.jən/ *n.* sweat; perspiration  
**ketsi** /kə.tsì/ *n.* soil erosion  
**ketsinyu** /kə.tsi.nju/ *n.* a tiny object  
**kewhen** /kə.mě/ *n.* playing; any kind of sport  
**keyen** /kə.jèn/ *adj.* hot; warm  
**keyhen<sup>1</sup>** /kə.jən/ *adj.* tasty  
**keyhen<sup>2</sup>** /kə.jən/ *n.* eclipse: *heka keyhen* ‘solar eclipse’, *shü keyhen* ‘lunar eclipse’.  
**keyhong** /kə.jõ/ *n.* life  
**keyolanyu** /kə.jò.la.njü/ *n.* harlot  
**khajona** /kha.dʒo.na/ *n.* tax levied on each house  
 [Assamese খাজনা *khajna* < Persian خزانه *khizānat*]  
**kharu** /kha.ru/ *n.* areca nut  
**khegü** /khə.gə/ *n.* wild bamboo  
**khelyü** /khə.ljə/ *n.* fog  
**khen** /khən/ *n.* cage; a round or square bamboo basket in which you keep birds and small animals: *tegü khen* ‘birdcage’, *tebo khen* ‘a bamboo basket in which a piglet is carried from home to the market and vice versa’.  
**khenphu**, **khemphu** /khəm.phu/ *n.* doorframe  
**khenyechüü**, **khennyechüü** /khən.njə.tʃə.tə/ *n.* a conch-shell necklace  
**khetdyü** /khə.djə/ *n.* yellow-crested woodpecker

**khilota** /khi.lò.tà/ *v.* take something from a certain place. See *lo<sup>3</sup>*.  
**khing** /khĩ/ ~ /khín/ *v.* close (door, box, window)  
**khingshen** /khin.ʃən/ *n.* owl  
**khingshü** /khín.ʃǎ/ *v.* open (door, box, window)  
**kho** /khò/ *mod.* Used to express the cohortative mood: *Kho kaki gong gwen men ncho* ‘Let us go home now’.  
**khong<sup>1</sup>** /khõ/ ~ /khón/ *n.* plate; dish: *tu khong* ‘plate on which we eat rice’.  
**khong<sup>2</sup>** /khõ/ ~ /khòn/ *v.* crow  
**khoshong** /khó.ʃõ/ *n.* knee  
**khotso** /kho.tsá/ *n.* small basket for measuring rice  
**khotse** /khò.tsé/ *n.* elbow: *nkhotse* (citation form).  
**khu** /khu/ *n.* a small cane basket that holds and carries vegetables from the swidden fields  
**khü** /khá/ *v.* sweep  
**khükemon** /khá.kə.mõ/ *v.* pile littered leaves in one place with a broom  
**khwen<sup>1</sup>** /khwě/ *n.* language; voice  
**khwen<sup>2</sup>** /khwě/ *n.* leaf  
**khwen<sup>3</sup>** /khwě/ *n.* waiting  
**khwen seli** /khwě.sə.lí/ *n.* the flower aka blossom of wild banana  
**khwen tsen** /khwě.tsən/ *n.* wild banana  
**khwenbo** /khwě.bo/ ~ /khwèm.bo/ *n.* red banana  
**khyü** /khjə/ *n.* bee  
**khyüdi** /khjə.di/ *n.* honey  
**khyüninyhen** /khjə.nin.jən/ *n.* the yellow paper wasp  
**kinthü** /kìn.thə/ *n.* boil; painful pus-filled swelling on the skin  
**kinthü kepo di** /kìn.thə.kə.pò.di/ *n.* pus  
**ko<sup>1</sup>** /ko/ *sfx* and *post.* Used to make the past tense: *temen le temi ten ko* ‘A tiger grabbed a goat’, *Ligi le latsi khwen lo Karenga pi ko* ‘She gave a book to Karenga’.  
**ko<sup>2</sup>** /ko/ *v.* call  
**kong** /kon/ *adj.* cold  
**konchen** /kòn.tʃən/ *n.* quiet; with little or no noise  
**kü** /ká/ *v.* climb  
**la** /là/ *n.* pot; container  
**laji** /là.dʒi/ *n.* any large spoon used to serve food: *heng laji* ‘a serving spoon’, *tu laji* ‘a rice paddle’.  
**lapang khingshen** /la.pǎ.khin.ʃən/ *n.* Hodgson’s frogmouth, *Batrachostomus hodgsoni*  
**latsi khwen** /la.tsi.khwě/ *n.* book  
**le<sup>1</sup>** /le/ *post.* nominative marker: *Jisu le Bethlehem-nyu nnyu lo* ‘Jesus was born in Bethlehem’, *Liden le kethennyu nchi ko sho* ‘They hated the old



man'. Variants of this postpositive are *e* and *we*, e.g. *Jangthosheng e Karenga ka shin ng ko rincho lo nyu tu tü phinyi bing la?* 'Jangthosheng asked Karenga, "Do you like to eat swidden rice?"', *liyhu we tu tü bing nyo ~ liyhu le tu tü bing nyo* 'They eat rice', and *Jojenlü lo Rega ba kenrah kethü jo shwen(g) we tesho-shennyu keti da sha bing ma* 'Even the smallest ant knows the rumours surrounding Jojenlü's affairs with Rega'.  
**le<sup>2</sup>** /lə/ *pron.* that: *le ka /lə ka/* 'that house'. The locativised form is *leka /lə.kà/* 'there'.

**li** /li/ *pron.* third person pronominal base: *sgl.fem. ligi*, *sgl.masc. ligü*, *du. liyhu /li.ju/*, *pl. liden*. The forms of the pronoun do not change when marked for the genitive: *ligi nyugi* 'her daughter', *liyhu ka* 'their (du.) house', *liden phen* 'their (pl.) village'.

**ligü-higi** /li.gə hi.gi/ *pron.* anyone; anybody

**lihida** /li.hi.dà/ *pron.* anything

**lo<sup>1</sup>** /lól/ *mod.* imperative marker: *tsehü ten lo* 'Catch the fish', *kerehyü ten lo* 'Catch the thief'.

**lo<sup>2</sup>** /lo/ *post.* a marker of the perfective aspect: *Serishen le Shahonyu phenka nnyu lo* 'Serishen was born in Shahonyu village'.

**lo<sup>3</sup>** /lə/ *v.* take.

**logi** /lo.gì/ *n.* eagle

**loju** /lól.dzú/ *n.* country

**lonyi** /lə.njí/ *n.* morning

**lotünyu** /lo.tə(n).njú/ *n.* munia

**lü<sup>1</sup>** /lə/ *n.* song

**lü<sup>2</sup>** /lə/ *v.* pick; detach fruits, flowers, etc. from their stalks: *nyen lü /njě lól/* 'pick flower', *terashah lü /tə.rá.fá? lól/* 'pick fruit'.

**lumbu** /lə.bù/ *n.* arrow

**lübwenyyu** /lə.bwě.njù/ *n.* girl in her early teens

**lügen** /lə.gi/ *n.* sister: *alügen /ä.lə.gi/* (citation form), *alügen /a.lə.gi/* 'my sister'.

**lünnyu** /lə.njù/ *n.* a young girl (from late teens to thirty years of age)

**lünnyu katsü** /lə.njù ka.tsə/ *n.* girls' dormitory

**lüringnyu** /lə.rĩ.njù/ *n.* spinster

**lyü** /ljə/ *v.* be wet

**magi(nyu)** /mə.gi(.njù)/ *n.* widow

**magü** /mə.gə/ *n.* widower

**mah** /má?/ *n.* fire: *mah thü* 'make fire; ignite'.

**mahgi** /má?.gi/ *n.* charcoal

**mahkhyü** /má?.khjə/ *n.* tobacco

**mahnen** /má?.ně/ *n.* flambeau; a torch with a burning material attached on one end of a piece of bamboo

**mahphong** /má?.phò/ ~ /má?.phə/ *n.* oven

**mahpong** /má?.põ/ ~ /má?.pə/ *n.* cigarette

**mahsha** /má?.já/ *n.* gun

**mahsokhen** /má?.sò.khən/ *n.* a square/ rectangular bamboo tray suspended over a smouldering fire for smoking fish and meat for storage

**makhong** /ma.khón/ *n.* derrière

**mari** /ma.ri/ *n.* garlic pickle

**mejonnnyu** /mè.dzò.nju/ *n.* eunuch

**Mekeronyu** /me.kè.rò.nju/ *n.* the Karbis. The folk etymology is 'those who burn their dead'.

**men** /mən/ *n.* mouth

**menangnyu** /me.nă.nju/ *n.* kite; falcon

**menche** /mén.tjè/ *n.* black panther

**mendo** /mén.dól/ *n.* lion

**menghüh** /məŋ.hə?/ *n.* beard

**menshong** /məŋ.fõ/ *n.* grave

**menthyü** /mén.thjə/ *n.* cow; cattle

**mentsi** /mèn.tsi/ *n.* lip

**menzoh** /mén.zó?/ *n.* leopard

**merü** /mè.rá/ *n.* dwarf

**meserang** /mè.sə.ră/ ~ /mè.sə.rəŋ/ *n.* rabbit

**meserong** /mè.sə.ró/ ~ /mè.sə.rón/ *n.* fox. [Dimasa *mosrong*]

**me(t)sa** /mə?..sá/ *adj.* dirty

**mimi** /mi.mi/ *n.* sheep

**müi** /məi/ *n.* medicine

**müregi** /mə.rè.gi/ *n.* centipede

**myu<sup>1</sup>** /mjù/ *n.* father-in-law: *amyu /ä.mjù/* 'my father-in law'. The same is also the citation form.

**myu<sup>2</sup>** /mju/ *n.* spear

**nang** /nă/ *n.* bed

**narikol shah** /na.ri.kol já?/ *n.* coconut [Assamese *বান্ৰিকল* *nārikal* /na.ri.kəl/ < Sanskrit *nārikela*]

**nben ben** /ñ.bě.bě/ *n.* lower arm

**nbo, mbo** /ñ.bó/ *v.* kiss

**nbu, mbu** /ñ.bù/ *n.* excreta

**nbyang, mbyang** /ñ.bjá/ *n.* cheek

**nchedi** /ñ.tjè.di/ *n.* saliva

**nchen** /ñ.tjě/ *v.* serve

**nchennyu** /ñ.tjəŋ.njú/ *n.* a boy under the age of about twelve

**nchi** /ñ.tjĩ/ *v.* hate

**nchingshah** /ñ.tjĩŋ.já?/ *n.* calf of leg

**ncho** /ñ.tjə/ *adv.* now

**ncho da** /ñ.tjə da/ *adv.* again

**nchong<sup>1</sup>** /ñ.tjõ ~ ñ.tjón/ *n.* back (of the body)

**nchong<sup>2</sup>** /ñ.tjõ ~ ñ.tjəŋ/ *n.* Himalayan crestless porcupine, *Hystrix brachyuran*

**ndereh** /ñ.dè.ré?/ *v.* shiver; tremble

**ndyü** /ñ.djə/ *n.* yesterday

**nen**<sup>1</sup> /nèn/ *n.* thread

**nen**<sup>2</sup> /nén/ *v.* send

**ng** /ŋ/ *pron.* second person pronominal base: *sgl.* *ng*, *du.* *ngghi* /ŋ.hi/, *pl.* *nggong*. The forms remain unchanged in the genitive case: *ng latsi khwen* ‘your book’, *ngghi bipang* ‘your (du.) money’, *nggong ka* ‘your (pl.) house’.

**ngo** /ŋ.go/ *n.* laughing thrush. The loud calls of this bird may predict good or bad outcomes. If the bird laughs to the right, it is good luck, but if it laughs to the left, it is a bad omen.

**nhenko, nhengko** /ŋ.hě.kò/ *v.* lose

**nhennyu** /ŋ.hě.nju/ *n.* daytime

**nhi** /ŋ.hi/ *v.* forget. In the villages, some speakers alternate *nhi* with *shamuko*.

**nhing** /ŋ.hĩ/ ~ /ŋ.hě/ *n.* a species of bamboo with a small but firm woody stem

**nhü** /ŋ.hú/ *n.* face. Cf. *ngghu* /ŋ.hú/ ‘your face’.

**ningkhongü** /nĩ.khõ.gə/ ~ /nĩ.khõŋ.gə/ *n.* black-hooded oriole

**ningrü** /nĩn.rə/ *v.* return; to be back

**njin** /ŋ.dʒĩ/ *v.* itch

**nkah** /ŋ.káʔ/ *n.* bite

**nkhen** /ŋ.khán/ *n.* south

**nkhu** /ŋ.khù/ *v.* mend net or cloth; repair a hole or a tear in a net or fabric

**nkhwén** /ŋ.khwě/ *v.* stack firewood in piles

**nkhyü** /ŋ.khjə/ *v.* cough

**nki** /ŋ.ki/ *number* twenty

**nkingshi** /ŋ.kĩŋ.jĩ/ *v.* tremble in fear

**nkyu** /ŋ.kju/ *v.* lie; speak falsely

**nmempvu** /ŋ.məm.pfu/ *n.* bluebottle; blowfly

**nmenchen** /ŋ.mən.tʃən/ *n.* body

**nmwe** /ŋ.mwè/ ~ **nmuwe** /ŋ.mù.we/ *conj.* if

**nnaphvu** /ŋ.ná.pfú/ *v.* fill a jar, pot, or similar container

**nnye(t)** /ŋ.njət/ ~ /ŋ.njəʔ/ *adj.* sweet

**nnyi** /ŋ.nji/ *n.* wild pig

**nnyijong** /ŋ.nji.dʒõ/ ~ **nnyizong** /ŋ.nji.zõ/ *n.* shin

**nnyijong rü** /ŋ.nji.dʒõ rə/ ~ **nnyizong rü** /ŋ.nji.zõ rə/ *n.* tibia

**nnyon** /ŋ.njõ ~ /ŋ.njõŋ/ *n.* chest; heart as the place from where feelings or emotions are aroused

**nnyu**<sup>1</sup> /ŋ.njú/ *v.* born (*see* p.14)

**nnyu**<sup>2</sup> /ŋ.nju/ *v.* dissolve a substance like sugar or powder in water

**npeng, mpeng** /ŋ.pě/ *n.* rice straw

**npha berü** /ŋ.phá bè.rə/ *n.* talus; anklebone

**npha gon** /ŋ.phá gõ/ *n.* ankle

**npha shu** /ŋ.phá ʃu/ *n.* footprint (citation form):

*ngpha shu* /ŋ.phá ʃu/ ‘your footprint’.

**nphimünyu, mphimünyu** /ŋ.phi.mə.nju/ *n.* enemy: *aphimünyu* ‘my enemy’, *nggong phimünyu* ‘your (2pl.gen.) enemy’.

**npho** /ŋ.phó/ *n.* north

**nphu** /ŋ.phu/ *n.* alligator

**npunyu** /ŋ.pú.nju/ *n.* friend: *apunyu* ‘my friend’.

**npvu** /ŋ.pfu/ *adj.* alone

**npvunyu** /ŋ.pfũ.njũ/ *n.* upper arm

**npvü** /ŋ.pfə/ *pron.* reflexive pronoun: *a le ampvü* ‘I myself’, *ngghi le ngghi npvü* ‘you (2du.) yourself’, *liden le anyon npvü* ‘they (3pl.) themselves’.

**npyu** /ŋ.pju/ *n.* butterfly

**nri** /ŋ.rĩ/ *n.* axe

**nri kang** /ŋ.rĩ kã/ *n.* handle of an axe

**nrü** /ŋ.rə/ *n.* winnowing fan

**nrweng**<sup>1</sup> /ŋ.rwě/ *n.* wrist

**nrweng**<sup>2</sup> /ŋ.rwě/ *v.* break (pot, glass, etc.)

**nsen** /ŋ.sě/ *n.* waist

**nsenpvu** /ŋ.səm.pfu/ *n.* forehead

**nshah**<sup>1</sup> /ŋ.ʃáʔ/ *n.* Job’s tears

**nshah**<sup>2</sup> /ŋ.ʃãʔ/ *v.* bear fruit

**nshebo** /ŋ.ʃě.bó/ *n.* a stench that comes from cooking and sweaty clothes

**nshü** /ŋ.ʃə/ *n.* dove

**nsi** /ŋ.si/ *v.* spit out

**nsih** /ŋ.sĩʔ/ *v.* kick

**nteh** /ŋ.tèʔ/ *v.* sneeze. The noun is **kenteh** /kən.tèʔ/.

**nthen** /ŋ.thən/ *v.* jump

**nthi** /ŋ.thi/ *n.* millet

**nthu** /ŋ.thú/ *v.* fear; be afraid. See **kenthu**.

**nthyü** /ŋ.thjə/ *n.* today

**nting** /ŋ.tĩŋ/ *n.* end: *anting* /àn.tĩŋ/ (citation form).

**ntsi** /ŋ.tsi/ *n.* hookworm

**ntso** /ŋ.tsò/ *v.* weep silent tears

**nya** /njá/ *n.* a sarong-like dress worn by women

**nya phyang** /njá phjã/ *n.* loincloth

**nyah** /njàʔ/ *v.* wear (a sarong)

**nye** /njə/ *post.* prohibitive negative: *Ng le reyhyü nye* ‘Thou shall not steal’ (Exodus 20:15). The Tsem. variant is *nya* /nja/, as in *Hagun rühu nya* ‘Thou shall not steal’ (*Kenshün Lesü*: Chwenketin 20:15).

**nyen**<sup>1</sup> /njě/ *n.* flower

**nyen**<sup>2</sup> /njě/ *v.* learn; know something; gain knowledge of something

**nyen**<sup>3</sup> /njèn/ *v.* wipe something clean or dry it with a piece of cloth

**nyepvü** /njə.pfə/ *n.* husband

**nyetdi** /njəʔ.di/ *n.* milk. The literal meaning is ‘sweet water/liquid’. Cf. **nnyet** ‘sweet’.

**nyhen** /ŋ.jě/ *n.* vein

**nyhet** /ñ.jə̀t/ ~ /ñ.jə́ʔ/ *v.* extinguish; put out fire; blow a candle out

**nyhü**<sup>1</sup> /ñ.jə̀/ *n.* cloud

**nyhü**<sup>2</sup> /ñ.jə̀/ *v.* shout

**nyhü tsi(h)** /ñ.jə̀ tsìʔ/ *v.* whistle

**nyhun** /ñ.jùn/ *v.* dance

**nyi**<sup>1</sup> /nji/ *mod.* used to express the desiderative mood: *Ako kedah thülo phi nyi bing nyo* ‘I wish I could be a king’.

**nyi**<sup>2</sup> /nji/ *n.* tongue

**nyi**<sup>3</sup> /nji/ *v.* hear; listen

**nyi**<sup>4</sup> /nji/ *v.* laugh. The noun is **kenyi** /kə̀.nji/.

**nyilo** /nji.lò/ *v.* obey

**nyiten** /nji.tè/ *n.* ear

**nyitsong** /nji.tsò/ *n.* navel

**nyongkhangrü** /njö.khã.rə̀/ *n.* rib

**nyongwamu** /njö.gwa.mù/ *adj.* sad; unhappy; downhearted: *nyongwamu swa* ‘sick at heart’.

**nyongwen** /njö.gwən/ ~ /njoŋ.gwən/ *v.* vomit

**nyonkenjing** /njö.kən.dʒĩ/ ~ /njö.kən.dʒĩŋ/ *adj.* angry

**nyoshangkü** /njo.ʃaŋ.ká/ *n.* armpit

**-nyu**<sup>1</sup> /nju/ *sfx.* added to names of animals to denote their young: *tehihnyu* ‘puppy’, *tebonyu* ‘piglet’, *pyongnyu* ‘baby elephant’, *temennyu* ‘tiger cub’, *tegünyu* ‘nestling’, *menthyünyu* ‘calf’.

**-nyu**<sup>2</sup>, **nyu**<sup>2</sup> /nju/ *sfx* and *post.* 1. relational marker.

2. forms collective nouns (*see* section 7)

**nyu**<sup>3</sup> /nju/ *v.* grind

**nyugi** /nju.gi/ *n.* daughter

**nyugü** /nju.gə̀/ *n.* son

**nyuphüpvü** /nju.phə̀.pfə̀/ *n.* pregnant woman

**nyü** /njə̀/ *n.* wife

**Nzang** /ñ.zã/ *n.* an endonym that Assam Rengmas use for themselves. The section of same people in Tseminyu calls themselves *Nzon* /ñ.zõ/.

**panchang** /pan.tʃã/ ~ /pan.tʃãŋ/ *n.* hoolock gibbon (female). The male, which has dark fur, is called

**panchye** /pã.tʃjé/ ~ /pan.tʃjé/. See **teping**.

**pang chipo** /pã tʃi.po/ *n.* jack bean, *Canavalia gladiata*

**pebang** /pe.bá/ *n.* house wall

**pechünyu** /pə̀.tʃə̀.nju/ *n.* man (male)

**pelah** /pə̀.làʔ/ *n.* fence

**pen**<sup>1</sup> /pè/ *n.* mushroom

**pen**<sup>2</sup> /pé/ *v.* carry on the head or the shoulder; take a baby in your arms

**penlo** /pən.lo/ *n.* complete. Antonym: **penlomu**.

**penyi** /pě.nji/ *n.* betel leaf

**pere** /pə̀.rə̀/ *n.* snake

**pethigü** /pə̀.thí.gə̀/ *n.* chief; elder

**peze** /pè.zè/ *number* four

**pha** /phá/ *n.* leg: *npha* /ñ.phá/ (citation form).

**phagwen** /pha.gwən/ *n.* vulture

**phajongpvü** /phá.dʒòm.pfə̀/, also spelt **phazongpvü** /phá.zòm.pfə̀/ *n.* toe. Shortened to **phapvü**.

**phajüh** /phá.dʒə̀ʔ/ *n.* sole, the underside of a person’s foot

**phasen** /phá.sən/ *n.* a ladder made from a single piece of log and has grooved notches for the foot when climbing

**phathi** /phá.thi/ *n.* heel

**pheh** /phèʔ/ *n.* cloth

**pheh nbu** /phèʔ ñ.bú/ *n.* breast cover. Shortened to **phembu** /phém.bú/.

**phehlu** /phèʔ.lú/ *n.* cockroach

**phen** /phèn/ *n.* village

**phe(t)** /phə̀t/ ~ /phə́ʔ/ *v.* uproot a tree or plant

**phi** /phi/ *v.* see; look

**phigwa** /phi.gwa/ *adj.* good to look at; beautiful

**phigwamu** /phi.gwa.mù/ *adj.* ugly

**phin** /phĩ/ ~ /phě/ *v.* tie; bind

**phiye** /phí.je/ *v.* untie

**phüneh** /phə̀.néʔ/ *n.* torso

**phuyong** /phu.jö/ ~ /phu.joŋ/ *n.* crocodile

**phvu**<sup>1</sup> /pfhù/ *v.* look for something or somebody

**phvu**<sup>2</sup> /pfhu/ ~ **phvü** /pfhə̀/ *v.* count; calculate the number of things or people. The noun is **kephvu** ~ **kephvü**.

**phye** /phjé/ *v.* to lay out; unroll; roll out: *bi phye* ‘roll out the mat’.

**phyen**<sup>1</sup> /phjè/ *v.* shoot with a *pyakhang* or straight-limbed, slingshot bow; hit with spear

**phyen**<sup>2</sup> /phjón/ *v.* throw (in any direction)

**phyu** /phjú/ *v.* wash: *pha phyu* ‘wash feet’, *hu phyu* ‘wash face’.

**pi**<sup>1</sup> /pi/ *n.* head: *npi* /ñ.pi/ (citation form).

**pi**<sup>2</sup> /pi/ *v.* give

**piding bu** /pi.dĩŋ bu/ *n.* wooden hammer

**pikegwen** /pi.kə̀.gwè/ *n.* headhunter

**pikhen** /pi.khèn/ *n.* pillow

**pikhongrü** /pi.khón.rə̀/ *n.* skull

**pikhü** /pi.khá/ *n.* comb

**ping** /pĩ/ ~ /pě/ ~ /pen/ *n.* a common term for silver anklets and bracelets. Specifically, *ben-ping* is the bracelet and *pha-ping* is the anklet.

**pirü** /pi.rə̀/ *v.* rise; go up; move upwards

**pishü** /pi.ʃə̀/ *n.* brain

**pithong** /pi.thõ/ *n.* hat

**piyhu** /pi.jə̀/ *n.* turban

**pobwennyu** /pò.bwè.njú/ *n.* a boy in his early teens

**ponyu** /pò.njú/ *n.* a young man (from late teens to thirty years of age)

**poringnyu** /pò.rĩ.njú/ *n.* an unmarried man above 45 years of age. The term also refers to a ‘bachelor’ in a broad sense.

**pung** /pũ/ *number five*

**pü** /pə/ *n.* father. **npü** /ñ.pə/ (citation form).

**pvu**<sup>1</sup> /pfũ/ *n.* area where something grows well: *rincho lo pvu* ‘a swidden where crops grow well’, *terühpvu* ‘a place where canes grow well’.

**pvu**<sup>2</sup> /pfú/ *v.* wear (shirt, trousers)

**pvuhanyu** /pfú.hã.njú/ *n.* mouse

**pvuli** /pfu.li/ *n.* flute

**-pvü**<sup>1</sup> /-pfə/ *sfx.* added to the name of a female bird or animal that has given birth at least once: *tebopvü* ‘sow’, *temenpvü* ‘tigress’, *menthyüpvü* ‘cow (not a heifer)’. See *terüpvü* and *pyongpvü*.

**pvü**<sup>2</sup> /pfə/ *v.* carry on the back

**pyakhang** /pjà.khã/ ~ /pjà.khan/ *n.* a straight-limbed, double-stringed slingshot bow with a cradle for blunt projectiles. Note: the usual catapult with a Y-shaped frame and two rubber strips attached to a sling-bullet pouch is called a **robor pya** /ro.bor.pjã/.

**pyen**<sup>1</sup> /pjən/ *n.* bridge

**pyen**<sup>2</sup> /pjən/ *n.* needle

**pyong** /pjõ/ ~ /pjõŋ/ *n.* elephant

**pyong hikang** /pjõŋ.hi.kã/ *n.* elephant trunk

**pyong hü** /pjõŋ.hə/ *n.* elephant tusk; ivory

**pyong pechü** /pjõ.pə.tʃə/ ~ /pjõm.pə.tʃə/ *n.* a bull elephant

**pyongpvü** /pjõm.pfə/ *n.* a female elephant that has given birth to at least one calf

**qwen (kwen)** /kwən/ *n.* corner: *aqwenka* /ã.kwən.kã/ ‘in the corner’, *ka qwengka* /ka.kwən.kã/ ‘in the corner of the house’.

**qwenda (kwenda)** /kwən.da/ *n.* rhinoceros

**qwet (kwet)** /kwət/ ~ /kwəʔ/ *n.* sugarcane

**qwetdi (kwetdi)** /kwəʔ.di/ *n.* jaggery

**rang** /rã/ *n.* rope

**rapvu** /rà.pfú/ *n.* roundworm

**rechín** /rə.tʃĩ/ ~ /rə.tʃĩŋ/ *v.* think

**regín** /ré.gĩ/ ~ /ré.gĩŋ/ *n.* cobra

**reh** /réʔ/ *v.* mix (water with wine or milk)

**rekkyü, rehkyü** /rəʔ.khjə/ *n.* a large basket

**rengsheh** /reŋ.ʃéʔ/ *n.* morung; dormitory for boys

**renyibo** /rə.njĩ.bó/ *n.* the smell of rotten eggs

**renyongmu** /rə.njõ.mù/ *adj.* feeling sad because of a loss

**reshu** /rə.ʃu/ *v.* worship

**reyhyo** /rə.j(j)ð/ *v.* swim

**reyhyü** /rə.j(j)ə/ *v.* steal

**rheme** /rə.méʔ/ *n.* ghost

**rhemü** /rə.mə/ *n.* bedbug

**rhen** /rən/ *v.* live; be alive

**rho** /rə/ *v.* chide; scold

**rhu** /rə/ *v.* draw (picture)

**rhüda** /rə.dá/ *n.* soya bean

**ri** /rí/ *v.* aim; point a weapon at what you intend to hit

**rincho** /rin.tʃo/ *n.* hill

**rincho lo** /rin.tʃo.ló/ *n.* swidden agriculture

**rinnyu** /rĩ.njú/ *n.* stream; small river

**ro** /rò/ *v.* burn

**rong** /ron/ *n.* boat

**ronjennyu phen** /ròn.dʒən.nju.phən/ *n.* the village of the dead

**ronjennyu tsang** /ròn.dʒən.nju.tsã/ *n.* the road that leads to the village of the dead

**rü**<sup>1</sup> /rə/ *v.* come

**rü**<sup>2</sup> /rə/ *v.* sew; stitch. Nominalised by adding the prefix *ke-*, as in *pheh kerü* ‘cloth stitching’.

**rügi** /rə.gí/ *n.* skin; hide: *arügi* (citation form).

**rün** /rən/ *v.* cover utensil with lid

**rünyi** /rə.njĩ/ *n.* a clustered settlement that is larger than a village

**ru** /ru.po/ *n.* silver [Assamese *ৰূপ* *rūp(a)* /rup/]

**sedo** /sə.dó/ *n.* nape

**sekko, sehko** /səʔ.ko/ *n.* rice (uncooked)

**sekong** /sə.kõ/ ~ /sə.kõŋ/ *v.* take care of somebody

**selule** /sə.lu.le/ *adj.* shallow; having water that is not deep

**sembe** /səm.bé/ *n.* millipede

**sen** /sè/ *n.* trap; snare: *nsen* /ñ.sè/ (citation form).

**sندیü** /sən.djə/ *n.* tomorrow

**sengkü** /səŋ.kə/ *n.* noose trap

**sengü** /səŋ.gə/ *n.* father-in-law of your son or daughter: *asengü* /ã.səŋ.gə/ (citation form).

**sengwen** /səŋ.gwən/ *n.* evening

**senkethügi** /sè.kə.thə.gə/ *n.* teacher (male teacher). Alternative spelling: **senkethyügi**.

**senmeren** /səm.mə.ré/ *n.* garlic

**senphang** /səm.phã/ *n.* bat; flying fox

**senphrang** /sè.phrã/ ~ /sèm.phrən/ *n.* onion. Some also use the term **sonyi kedahgi** /sõ.nji.kə.dəʔ.gi/ as a synonym. [Dimasa *samphrang*]

**senthü** /sè.thə/ *v.* teach. Also spelt **senthyü** and pronounced /sè.thjə/.

**senzo** /sən.zo/ *n.* bamboo rat

**sha** /ʃa/ v. know. The noun is *kesha* /kə.ʃa/.

**shabong** /ʃa.bõ/ ~ /ʃa.bon/ n. soap [Assamese চাবোণ *cābon* /sa.bon/]

**shah** /ʃǎʔ/ *sfx* and *post.* added to the names of fruits and certain nouns denoting roundish objects

**shangging** /ʃǎ.gín/ ~ /ʃaŋ.gín/ n. nilgai; a large Indian antelope

**shangpura** /ʃǎ.pu.ra/ ~ /ʃam.pu.ra/ n. pumpkin

**Shangpvunyu** /ʃǎ.pfũ.nju/ ~ /ʃam.pfũ.nju/ n. the Dimasa

**she**<sup>1</sup> /ʃe/ n. python

**she**<sup>2</sup> /ʃe/ v. die

**shejangi** /ʃé.dʒəŋ.gi/ n. younger sister

**shejengü** /ʃé.dʒəŋ.gə/ n. younger brother

**shelu** /ʃə.lu/ n. shirt [Assamese চাৰু *cālu* /sa.lu/ ‘a piece of red fabric’; cf. *colā* /so.la/ ‘shirt’]

**shen**<sup>1</sup>, **sheng**<sup>1</sup> /ʃən/ number thousand: *shenme* /ʃəmme/ ‘one thousand’.

**shen**<sup>2</sup> /ʃən/ n. wood; firewood

**shen**<sup>3</sup> /ʃən/ v. hold

**shenben**, **shenbün** /ʃəm.bən/ n. a plant or tree from which we get wood

**shenchong** /ʃən.tʃoŋ/ n. domestic buffalo

**shenchonpikhi** /ʃən.tʃom.pi.khə/ n. grapes

**shenden** /ʃən.dən/ n. club; bludgeon

**sheng**<sup>2</sup> /tʃəŋ/ ~ /tʃən/ v. use

**shengka** /ʃəŋ.kà/ ~ **shengki** /ʃəŋ.kì/ *post.* (*locativised*) under: *bingkhen shengka* or *bingkhen shengki* ‘under the stool’.

**shenjo** /ʃē.dʒó/ ~ /ʃen.dʒó/ *adj.* dim-witted

**shenkechen** /ʃəŋ.kə.tʃən/ n. bamboo shoot

**shenreshu** /ʃən.rə.ʃú/ v. beg

**shenrü**<sup>1</sup>, **shengrü** /ʃən.rə/ number thirty

**shenrü**<sup>2</sup> /ʃən.rə/ v. bring

**shenthü** /ʃən.thə/ n. cinnamon

**shi**<sup>1</sup> /tʃi/ *post.* variant of **chi**<sup>1</sup>.

**shi**<sup>2</sup> /ʃi/ v. pull

**shi**<sup>3</sup> /ʃi/ v. wash (utensils). See **keshi**.

**shigen** /ʃi.gẽ/ *adv.* so; therefore: *Gogi le nthyü we rümu sho. Shigen, agong zu le khetjü tu bang chi* (or *shi*) *sho* ‘The maid has not come today. Therefore, our mother will prepare dinner for us’.

**shing** /ʃĩ/ ~ /ʃiŋ/ v. inquire; question

**shirhen** /ʃĩ.rẽ/ v. tear something apart; tear out of/from something

**shirhu** /ʃĩ.rú/ v. pull something apart

**sho**<sup>1</sup> /ʃõ/ *post.* Used to express certainty about the action the verb performs. In a way, it can function as a modal particle, indicating perfectivity. Conflated with *-ko*, it can form the past perfect: *Temen le temi tenko sho* ‘A tiger had caught a

goat’, *Ligi le latsi khwen lo Karenga piko sho* ‘She had given Karenga a book’.

**sho**<sup>2</sup> /ʃo/ v. love

**shoh** /ʃóʔ/ v. rise or get up from lying or sitting position; wake up

**shon**, **shong**<sup>1</sup> /ʃõ/ v. bury

**shong**<sup>2</sup> /ʃoŋ/ n. slacked lime

**shuthü** /ʃü.thə/ v. witness. See **shukethü**.

**shü**<sup>1</sup> /ʃä/ n. the moon; a lunar month

**shü**<sup>2</sup> /ʃä/ n. unhusked rice

**shu**<sup>3</sup> /ʃú/ *interrog pron.* who: *Ligi we shu?* ‘Who is she?’

**shügi** /ʃə.gí/ n. mirror

**shukethü** /ʃü.kə.thə/ n. witness. See **shuthü**.

**shümü**<sup>1</sup> /ʃä.mə/ n. spirit; a part of someone that continues to exist when they die. See also **kapü** and **rheme**.

**shümü**<sup>2</sup> /ʃä.má/ n. star

**shüpvü** /ʃə.pfə/ n. Venus

**shürhen** /ʃä.rén/ *adj.* happy: *a le shürhen* ‘I (am) happy’ (a verbless construction).

**shüthen** /ʃä.thě/ n. flour

**shyu** /ʃju/ n. trumpet

**soki** /so.kì/ *post.* (*locativised*) above: *chen soki* ‘(in) the sky above’.

**sökü** /sò.kə/ n. chin

**songthü** /soŋ.thə/ v. marry. *Songthü* is used in a general sense. However, the Rengmas tend to prefer the terms *kalu* and *tennyülo* regarding marriage. The noun is **songkethü** /soŋ.kə.thə/, which is also pronounced as /soŋ.gə.thə/.

**sopha** /sò.phà/ n. jaw

**sophariü** /sò.phà.rə/ n. jawbone

**swa** /swà/ v. deceive

**swen** /swě/ v. sow; plant

**tebangbvu** /tə.bǎ.bvu/ ~ /tə.bàm.bvu/ *adj.* (of tools and weapons) blunt

**tebinyen** /tə.bi.njẽ/ n. a cylindrical silver plug worn on the earlobe like jewellery

**tebo** /tə.bó/ n. pig; swine

**tebuyong** /tə.bù.jõ/ ~ /tə.bù.joŋ/ n. dung beetle

**techen** /tə.tʃən/ n. black oilseed

**techendi** /tə.tʃən.di/ n. oil

**tegi** /tə.gi/ n. iron

**tegonyu** /tə.gó.njú/ n. orphan

**tegu** /tə.gú/ n. crow; raven

**tegü**<sup>1</sup> /tə.gə/ n. bird

**tegü**<sup>2</sup> /tə.gə/ n. gold; diamond

**tegwa** /tə.gwà/ n. left-hand side or direction

**tegwenshah** /tə.gwəŋ.ʃǎʔ/ n. hailstone

**tehe** /tə.hé/ *n.* tick; a small blood-sucking creature found on dogs and cows

**tehen** /tə.hē/ *n.* forest

**tehennyu** /tə.hē.nju/ *n.* anything that lives or grows in the natural environment. Used mainly in compounds: *tehennyu thyü*, which translates as ‘forest animal’, is a determinative compound in which the modifier *tehennyu* is the unmarked genitive form.

**tehih** /tə.hì/ *n.* dog

**teken** /tə.kē/ *n.* dhole

**tekhu** /tə.khù/ *n.* mosquito

**tekü<sup>1</sup>** /tə.kə/ *n.* pit; ditch

**tekü<sup>2</sup>** /tə.kə/ *number nine*

**tekyu** /tə.kjú/ *n.* monkey; the Assam macaque

**teme** /tə.mè/ *n.* man; human

**temen** /tə.mē/ *n.* tiger: *mendah* /mén.dà/ ‘a big tiger’. Sometimes, it is also spelt **temeng**.

**temen kengwanyu** /tə.mē kəŋ.gwa.nju/ *n.* tigerman

**temen phajüh** /tə.mē phá.dʒá/ *n.* tiger’s paw

**temi** /tə.mì/ *n.* goat

**temo** /tə.mò/ *n.* vagina. **Amo** /à.mò/ is sometimes used instead of *temo*.

**ten** /tən/ *v.* grab; catch; arrest; seize

**tenang** /tə.nā/ *v.* meet

**teng** /tē ~ tēŋ/ *v.* run

**tengu** /tēŋ.gú/ *n.* gray langur

**tenhe** /təŋ.hé/ *n.* housefly

**tenru** /tən.ru/ *n.* ornament

**tenyülo** /tə.njè lò/ *v.* marry. It is used to mean that a boy marries a girl. See also **kalu**.

**tenyünyu** /tə.njè.njü/ *n.* woman

**tepan** /tə.pā/ *n.* hoolock gibbon, *Hoolock hoolock*

**tepennyi** /tə.pən.nji/ *v.* swallow something whole.

The root is **nyi** /nji/.

**tepen phet** /tə.pən phət/ *adj.* round like a ball

**tephu** /tə.phù/ *n.* cotton

**tephyü** /tə.phjə/ *n.* pangolin

**tepvu** /tə.pfú/ *n.* rat

**tepvu mentsengi** /tə.pfú mən.tsəŋ.gi/ *n.* shrew

**terashah** /tə.rá.fá/ *n.* fruit

**terashah di** /tə.rá.fá di/ *n.* fruit juice

**teren** /tə.rən/ *n.* poison

**terheh** /tə.ré/ *n.* head louse

**terhing** /tə.ŋĩ/ ~ /tə.ŋĩŋ/ *n.* bride price

**teri** /tə.rí/ *adj.* thirsty

**terih** /tə.rì/ *n.* war

**terü<sup>1</sup>** /tə.rə/ *n.* chicken

**terü<sup>2</sup>** /tə.rə/ *v.* tickle

**terü di** /tə.rə di/ *n.* egg

**terü güdi** /tə.rə gə.dí/ *n.* rooster

**terü güjwen** /tə.rə gə.dʒwě/ *n.* a hen that has not laid eggs yet

**terugü** /tə.ru.gə/ *n.* god; deity. The Christian God is called **Songgigü** /sòŋ.gi.gə/.

**terüh<sup>1</sup>** /tə.rə/ *n.* cane; rattan. **Terü-** in compounds.

**terüh<sup>2</sup>** /tə.rə/ *n.* wax

**terunyu thyü** /tə.rũ.nju thjə/ *n.* gaur; the Indian bison

**terüpvü** /tə.rə.pfə/ *n.* a hen that has laid eggs

**Tesennyu** /tə.sē.nju/ *n.* foreigner

**teshang** /tə.šǎ/ ~ /tə.šǎŋ/ *n.* sambar deer

**teshengki** /tə.šəŋ.kì/ *post.* below; under. Sometimes

**teshengka** /tə.šəŋ.kà/ is used instead of *teshengki*.

**teshishah** /tə.šĩ.fá/ *n.* cowrie

**tesho** /tə.šó/ *n.* ant

**tesho-shennyu** /tə.šó. šəŋ.njú/ *n.* any of the many tiny species of ants, including the Pharaoh ant

**teshü** /tə.šə/ *n.* termite; white ant

**tetse** /tə.tsé/ *n.* eight

**teze** /tə.zé/ *n.* blood

**tezi** /tə.zí/ *n.* right-hand side or direction

**thachishah** /tha.tʃĩ.fá/ *n.* mango

**thakhu** /thà.khu/ *n.* small bag; purse

**thang** /thá/ ~ /tháŋ/ *v.* squeeze

**thaphyong shah** /tha.phjə šá/ *n.* jackfruit

**thayeh** /tha.jə/ *n.* banana

**then<sup>1</sup>** /thón/ *n.* walking stick

**then<sup>2</sup>** /thē/ *v.* follow; go after or move behind somebody or something

**thenthö** /thən.thó/ *v.* force oneself to empty the bowels

**therasha** /thə.rà.ʃa/ *n.* chilli; pepper

**thi** /thí/ *n.* grandmother: **athi** /à.thí/ (citation form), **athi** /á.thí/ ‘my grandmother’.

**thü<sup>1</sup>** /thə/ *v.* do; make; work. **Nthü** /ñ.thə/ ‘create’ and **kenthü** /kən.thə/ ‘creation’.

**thü<sup>2</sup>** /thə/ *v.* take something yourself, without asking or needing permission

**thügwen<sup>1</sup>** /thə.gwě/ *n.* a common term for bear. The Nzang identify three species of the bear: *thügwen rihüh*, *gwenda*, and *gwenjo*. The *thügwen rihüh* /thə.gwě rí.hə/ or ‘sun bear’ is recognisable by an almost U-shaped yellow patch on its chest.

**thügwen<sup>2</sup>**, **thugwün** /thə.gwən/ *n.* lard; the white fat obtained from a pig’s belly

**thügwenbvü** /thə.gwəm.bvü/ *n.* the bear hair wig worn by Rengmas of previous generations

**thüh** /thə/ *n.* flesh; meat

**thükenho** /thə.kəŋ.hó/ *n.* an adult male wild pig that lives most of the time as a solitary animal outside the sounder

*thüsho* /thə.ʃó/ *n.* camel  
*thüyong* /thə.jò/ ~ /thə.jòn/ *n.* mountain goat  
*thüzen* /thə.zé/ *n.* Indian muntjac; barking deer  
*thyü*<sup>1</sup> /thjə/ *n.* pain; ache: *kethyü* /kə.thjə/ (citation form).  
*thyü*<sup>2</sup> /thjə/ *v.* shave  
*thyü*<sup>3</sup> /thjə/ *v.* sing: *lü thyü* ‘sing a song’.  
*thyüh* /thjəʔ/ *v.* wash articles like clothes  
*tí* /tì/ *v.* walk  
*tophen(g)* /tó.phé/ *n.* duck. [Dimasa *daoplam(du)*]  
*topri* /tó.pri/ ~ *toperi* /tó.pə.rì/ *n.* pigeon. [Dimasa *daophri*]  
*tosari* /tó.sá.rì/ *n.* common mynah, *Acridotheres tristis*. [Dimasa *daosari*. *Sari* is, however, an Indo-Aryan term; cf. Sanskrit *śārikā*.]  
*tsagi* /tsá.gi/ *n.* elder sister: *atsagi* /à.tsá.gi/ (citation form), *atsagi* /á.tsá.gi/ ‘my elder sister’.  
*tsagü* /tsá.gə/ *n.* elder brother: *atsagü* /à.tsá.gə/ (citation form), *atsagü* /á.tsá.gə/ ‘my elder brother’  
*tsang* /tsá/ *n.* road  
*tse* /tsé/ *v.* break (stick, twig, etc.)  
*tsega* /tsə.gá/ *v.* chew  
*tsegu* /tsə.gu/ *n.* crab  
*tsegyü* /tsə.gjə/ *n.* frog  
*tsehü* /tsə.hə/ *n.* fish  
*tsehüh* /tsə.həʔ/ *n.* thorn  
*tsekhu* /tsə.khu/ *n.* grasshopper; dragonfly; locust  
*tsemü* /tse.mə/ *n.* osprey  
*tsense(t)* /tsən.sət/ ~ /tsən.səʔ/ *adj.* sharp; pointed  
*tsentsengi* /tsən.tsən.gì/ *n.* glowfly; firefly  
*tsenyi* /tsə.njì/ *number* seven  
*tsera* /tsə.ra/ *v.* twist  
*tsering* /tsə.rì/ ~ /tsə.rìŋ/ *n.* otter  
*tsero* /tsə.ró/ *number* six  
*tserü* /tsə.rə/ *number* ten  
*tserü keme* /tsə.rə kə.mé/ *number* eleven  
*tserü kenshen(g)* /tsə.rə kən.ʃən/ *number* thirteen  
*tserü kenyhu* /tsə.rə kən.jù/ *number* twelve  
*tserü peze* /tsə.rə pè.zè/ *number* fourteen  
*tserü pung* /tsə.rə pù/ *number* fifteen

*tseyhen* /tsə.jən/ *v.* sweat; perspire  
*tst*<sup>1</sup> /tsì/ *v.* (of soil) to be eroded by natural agents  
*tst*<sup>2</sup> /tsí/ *v.* suck  
*tso*<sup>1</sup> /tso/ *v.* dig  
*tso*<sup>2</sup> /tsò/ ~ /tsòŋ/ *v.* stop; halt  
*tu* /tu/ *n.* rice (cooked); food  
*tusa* /tu.sa/ *n.* meal; dinner  
*tuswen* /tu.swè/ *n.* granary  
*tü* /tá/ *v.* eat. The noun is *ketü* /kə.tá/ ‘eating; consumption’.  
*tükebvü* /tə.kə.bvù/ *n.* a creeper used to poison fish

*when* /mè/ *v.* play  
*whetche* /məʔ.tʃé/ *adv.* suddenly  
*whudi* /mu.di/ *post.* before

*yanda* /jā.da/ ~ /jan.da/ *n.* cricket (insect)  
*yeh* /jəʔ/ *v.* enter; go in: *kanyuki yeh* ‘enter the house’.  
*yen* /jè/ *v.* fly  
*yenbuto* /jəm.bù.tò/ *adj.* lukewarm  
*yeü, yüe, eyü* /jìə/ ~ /jə/ *n.* squirrel  
*yhenmu* /jəm.mù/ *adj.* tasteless  
*yhong* /jə/ ~ /jəŋ/ *v.* grow  
*yhulo* /jù.lò/ *v.* get; receive  
*yhülo* /jə.lò/ *v.* find  
*yong* /jə/ ~ /jəŋ/ *v.* melt  
*yongkhu* /jəŋ.khu/ *n.* animal  
*yuh* /júʔ/ *v.* lick

*zambéh* /zəm.bəʔ/ *n.* ashes  
*zang* /zā/ *n.* day  
*zente* /zən.te/ *adj.* pitch dark  
*zongpvü* /zòm.pfə/ ~ *jongpvü* /dʒòm.pfə/ *n.* finger  
*zü* /zə/ *n.* liquor  
*züdi* /zə.di/ *n.* rice beer  
*zükeshangi* /zə.kə.ʃä.gì, zə.kə.ʃän.gì/ *n.* scorpion.  
 Shortened to *züshangi* /zə.ʃä.gì/ ~ /zə.ʃän.gì/.  
*züshing* /zə.ʃì/ ~ /zə.ʃìŋ/ *n.* Asiatic bush-tailed porcupine, *Atherurus macrourus*